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(Part A)

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, May 21, 2013

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[*English*]

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC) moved that Bill C-489, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (restrictions on offenders), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Chilliwack—Fraser Canyon for seconding this motion.

I am honoured to stand here and speak on my new Bill C-489, which is also called the “safe at home bill”. I do so on behalf of my constituents in Langley and other young victims who have lived in fear of their offenders. I am in awe of their bravery and courage to fight for the rights of future victims.

In my riding of Langley, two brave families lived in constant turmoil when the sex offenders of their children were permitted to serve house arrest in their neighbourhoods. In one case, the sex offender served a sentence right across the street from the victim, and in the other case, right next door. That is outrageous.

Neither child felt safe in their home or their neighbourhood, which is the very place where they should feel the safest. Their doors were locked and the blinds were kept closed. Every time they saw the sex offender the entire family was re-victimized. The families lived in continual turmoil as they watched the offenders possibly looking for an opportunity to reoffend or hurt somebody else. Their homes in the neighbourhoods that they had loved were now places they dreaded because their attackers were there. One family could not take the stress any more, which forced them to move out of the neighbourhood they had spent so many years loving.

One mother came to my office and asked me, “Why should we have to move from our home when we are the victims?” That is a good question. Everyone should have the right to feel safe in their home, and victims of sexual assault should be no exception.

This is why I brought forward Bill C-489, which I believe meets these important concerns head-on. If passed, the bill would help to

ensure the safety of victims and witnesses from convicted offenders. It would enhance the level of confidence that victims have in the justice system as well as help them feel that the justice system is hearing and responding to their concerns. The bill would achieve these objectives by proposing a number of amendments to the Criminal Code and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act.

Bill C-489 would prevent offenders, when released from prison, from contacting victims or witnesses. Specifically, the bill proposes that when an offender is convicted of a child sexual offence, the sentencing court would be required to consider imposing a specific geographic restriction of two kilometres from any dwelling in which the offender knows or ought to know that a victim may be present as well as a condition prohibiting the offender from being alone in any private vehicle with a child under the age of 16. Efforts to prevent contact between offenders and their victims should serve to increase public safety and victims' confidence in the sentencing process.

The bill would also require courts to impose conditions in all probation orders and conditional sentencing orders prohibiting an offender from communicating with any victim or witness, or from going to any place identified in the order. Although these conditions would be mandatory, the court could decide not to impose them if the victim or witness consented or if the court found exceptional circumstances, in which case written reasons would be required to explain the findings. I believe this would enhance public safety and confidence in the justice system by helping to ensure that victims and witnesses would not be contacted by offenders upon their release into the community except in exceptional circumstances or where the individual consents.

The bill also proposes to amend recognizance or peace bonds against individuals when there is a reasonable fear that they may commit a future child sex offence.

Specifically, the bill proposes to amend Section 810.1, peace bonds, to require a court to consider imposing conditions prohibiting the defendant from contacting any individual or going to any place named in the recognizance. As with the proposed probation and conditional sentence order amendments, the court could choose not to impose the conditions in the peace bond where there is consent of the individual or where the court finds exceptional circumstances. This amendment would also lead to enhanced public safety for victims and witnesses.

Private Members' Business

Lastly, Bill C-489 proposes to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, or the CCRA, to require decision-makers under that act to consider similar conditions. I would like to consider this amendment a bit more fully.

Currently under the CCRA, Parole Board of Canada tribunals and correctional officials are authorized to impose conditions on an offender when the individual is being released into the community under parole, stat release or temporary absence orders. This type of gradual and supervised conditional release into the community prior to the expiration of sentence is intended to help ensure public safety and successful reintegration of the offender into society. This is especially true where the offender has been imprisoned for many years and will have difficulty re-entering society without a carefully planned and monitored release strategy that includes tailored conditions and specialized programs that the offender must abide by at all times.

According to the 2012 Conditional Services of Canada annual report, there are currently about 22,000 offenders under the authority of the federal corrections system. About two-thirds of these offenders were convicted of a violent or sexual offence. About 38%, almost 9,000 offenders, are at any given time under active supervision in the community by corrections officers. All 9,000 of those offenders are required to abide by a mix of mandatory and discretionary conditions imposed by the authority of the CCRA. If offenders breach their conditions, they are subject to disciplinary measures, including having their conditional release revoked and being required to serve out the remainder of their sentence in prison. As the CCRA is currently structured, Section 133 provides the authority of the Parole Board of Canada, for example, to impose at its discretion any type of condition that meets the two objectives of conditional release. The first and primary consideration is public safety.

The second consideration is the successful reintegration of the offender into the community. Section 133 also references the regulations of the CCRA regarding mandatory conditions of release. Under this legislative authority, Section 161 of the regulations prescribes a number of specific conditions that must be imposed for all offenders in the community under conditional release, such as reporting as required to their parole officer, not possessing any weapons and reporting any changes in their address or employment, among other things.

While it is not uncommon for the Parole Board of Canada under the current regime to exercise its discretion to impose conditions prohibiting contact between offenders and victims when released, the point is that these are not mandatory conditions nor are these conditions that the Parole Board of Canada is required to consider under the current Section 133. I spoke earlier about the two cases in my riding of Langley where the victims and their families felt that their welfare had not been taken into account when these decisions were made by the Parole Board of Canada.

One of the objectives of Bill C-489 is to respond to these types of concerns. It proposes new mandatory conditions prohibiting the offender from communicating with any identified victims or witnesses and from going to a place identified in the condition. This objective is entirely consistent with the government's initiatives

that have provided a greater emphasis on safer communities in general and victims in particular.

● (1110)

As with the bill's other proposed amendments, the releasing authority would not have to impose the condition if there were exceptional circumstances or if the identified individual consented. These two exceptions would ensure that the provision is flexible enough to accommodate the types of circumstances that would undoubtedly occur in practice.

Where the releasing authority does find that exceptional circumstances do exist, reasons for making that finding must be provided in writing explaining how it came to that conclusion. I believe this requirement would ensure that victims and witnesses better understand the Parole Board's decisions.

I expect that the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights will want to fully consider this bill and its operational impacts to ensure that it operates as intended and that its objectives are fully achieved.

Public confidence in our justice system is important. It pains me to hear from victims of crime that they have to speak out to say that they have been forgotten and that the justice system does not consider how sentencing affects them. This is a gap that Bill C-489 seeks to address and I believe it hits the mark.

I hope by tabling this bill that this House and this government will act to enhance public safety by holding criminals accountable, by enhancing the voice of the victims and by making victims feel safe in their homes and neighbourhoods. I ask for support from the hon. members in the House in helping to get the bill passed into law so that young victims and their families can feel safe at home and in their neighbourhoods.

● (1115)

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my Conservative colleague for his Bill C-489.

I would just like to ask him a quick question. I understand that the Subcommittee on Private Members' Business studied the bill and deemed it votable, which is why we are now considering it in the House. However, the clerk stated that clause 1 of the bill, amending subsection 161(1) of the *Criminal Code*, could pose problems. He pointed out that although this clause was not clearly unconstitutional, it could still face a constitutional challenge.

I would therefore ask my hon. colleague whether he consulted with constitutional experts—other than the law clerks who help us draft bills—to ensure that the bill was indeed constitutional.

[English]

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, I have consulted. I started working on this bill about two years ago. It was initiated by a Langley resident who came to my office and asked the important question, "If we are the victims, why should we have to leave our home?"

Private Members' Business

The experts have indicated that the bill is sound. It would provide the courts the discretion they need. Therefore, I believe it would withstand the challenge. The experts have told me so.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Langley for this very important bill. There are many victims in this country who have never felt as if they have been heard.

Our government has done much. It is a government for the victims. As the member has described the bill today, I would like to ask him this. It seems unconscionable that a family would have to close their blinds or run away from the perpetrator after it has been proven that he or she has committed a violent or sexual act against a minor. Could the member expand on what it is like for the constituents in his riding to have to endure this because often as parliamentarians we forget how difficult it is for victims?

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, if your child were sexually assaulted, can you imagine how you would feel toward the offender?

The reintegration of the person who has committed that offence is important. We need to make sure those persons deal with what has caused them to commit that offence. However we also need to consider the victims.

In one case the offender lived right next door to the victim's family. In another case, the victim's family lived right across the street from the offender. Every time they saw the offender cutting the lawn, being out and living life quite normally, it created a huge turmoil in the victim's family. The stress it created on the family was intolerable and eventually they had to move out. The neighbourhood used to have barbecues. It was a very tight, close neighbourhood. It all ended when the offender was permitted to serve the sentence at home.

We need to consider the rights of the victim.

• (1120)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, some towns in my community do not even cover two kilometres. These are really small towns.

I would like to know how this standard would apply to such places.

[*English*]

Mr. Mark Warawa: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question. In the initial draft of my bill, it was a five-kilometre separation. We quickly found that would not be practical and changed it to two.

That may not be practical in certain circumstances. That is why the bill provides discretion to the courts. They do not necessarily have to do this, but they would have to provide a reason why not.

Two kilometres sets the standard. If two kilometres does not work in certain circumstances, it would be adjusted to what is practical.

The principle is, though, that a victim should not have to see, on a daily basis, the offender serving the sentence right across the street from them. The courts will determine what is reasonable.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-489, introduced by the hon. member for Langley. This important bill certainly addresses a number of problems that many people have raised, including the ombudsman for victims.

The New Democratic Party does not play political games with bills amending the Criminal Code. We feel it is better to address serious issues and solve serious problems in a logical way that is consistent with the Criminal Code.

Since I like to get straight to the point, I will say to the member opposite that we are going to support his bill at second reading. We believe that everyone in the House should be concerned about victims, not for a political purpose, but because we really want to help them on the path to recovery—if there is such a path, because it is not always clear. Some horrible crimes cause such terrible harm that, regardless of what we can do to mitigate things, regardless of anything we can do, it will never go away.

To follow up on the question I asked my colleague about Bill C-489, I think the study by the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights will help us see if the bill can pass the charter compatibility test. When the Subcommittee on Private Members' Business was studying the bill, the clerk said that it was not clearly unconstitutional, but that it could be susceptible to a constitutional challenge. That sends a message. The committee will determine if this passes the compatibility test.

When she asked her excellent question, my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue clearly said that, for a number of reasons, it might be difficult to apply Bill C-489 in some cases. For one thing, it would prevent someone from moving to an area near the victim. That implies that the criminal serving a sentence would know where the victim lives, which seems problematic to me. Something about that bothers me.

However, as I told my colleagues when we were studying Bill C-489 before recommending that it be supported at second reading, I appreciate that some discretion was left to the courts. The committee will also have to verify whether the courts will be able to fully exercise their discretion.

This discretion should not be seen as some undefined power. The public sometimes sees it as being soft on criminals, to the detriment of victims. Here, it simply means that judges will look at the facts of each individual case.

In some circumstances, it may be difficult to set certain conditions. For example, it may be more difficult in a town than in a city, where the offender could live 5, 6 or 7 kilometres away.

I appreciate how my colleague from Langley crafted his bill. He did not strip the courts of all discretionary power, as the government opposite so often does. That approach jeopardizes bills, even those that the Conservative government passes, because there is a large black cloud hovering over their heads, and it leads defence lawyers to challenge certain provisions.

Private Members' Business

We cannot allow this legal game to even get started. We need to make it clear that the facts will be looked at on a case-by-case basis. Therefore, the best sentence will be applied in each situation, once the person is found guilty. The judge is in the best position to do that, or the jury in certain circumstances.

That is why this bill is so important. We have been saying that all along, despite what is being said at press conferences. I am tired of hearing it, particularly from the Minister of Justice. In my opinion, he should rise above the fray. The justice minister and Attorney General of Canada is not simply a political partisan, he is the keeper of Canadian laws. In that context, I feel that always bringing the debate back to “we’re tough on crime, they’re soft on crime” demeans his public office. It is a question of respect for the law.

• (1125)

All the NDP justice critics have taken this position. I would have liked to name them, but since I am not allowed to do so, I will just say that I am talking about the hon. member for St. John's East and his predecessor. I can never remember the riding names. What matters is that I remember the name of my own riding.

An hon. member: Windsor—Tecumseh.

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Yes. It was the hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh. That is teamwork.

We have always had this view of the law. We are making sure that the government respects justice. We never look at it from the perspective of what we want to accomplish. The government is there. It is in power until 2015. We may not be happy about it, particularly in light of the events that we followed with great interest during the week that we spent in our ridings, events that people were asking us about. Even though we did not want to get involved, we did not have a choice. I am talking about the magnificent chamber across the hall. Regardless, we believe that the law is sacred in Canada. Our country and our democracy are built on the rule of law.

When we ask questions about the legality or constitutionality of a bill, it is not just to get in the government's way or because we are soft on crime. We do so because we abide by the rule of law.

In closing, I would like to reiterate that the NDP will vote in favour of this bill at second reading. That is not a guarantee that we will support the bill at all stages. I will not go that far, because I have my doubts. Sometimes, we do not have any doubts about a bill and we support it right from the start. Sometimes, we are completely convinced that a bill does not work and so we vote against it. At the very least, this bill seems to be worthwhile and it shows respect for victims. What is more, we know what the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime said in his report.

The Minister of Justice is going from one press conference to another explaining that he is holding consultations to determine victims' needs. That sometimes makes me smile.

We know what victims need. Victims have been telling us loud and clear for years.

The Crown prosecutors' offices sometimes have difficulties consulting victims about criminal trials because they have an enormous number of files. This is not a criticism of the Crown

prosecutors; they just are overwhelmed by the number of cases. There is a shortage of Crown prosecutors and judges, which means that trials go on endlessly. This increases the victims' suffering. It is a fact that the longer the trial, the more times the victim must return to court. The problems caused by the fact that they are victims of a crime are not considered. They get peanuts. The government may not like it, but even though its Bill C-37 was passed, victims get peanuts.

Moreover, victims are not always given an explanation of the sentences, even though they have many questions about them. People do not always have the time to explain them, and that is unfortunate.

In that context, we support any measure that respects victims' rights and takes them into account in order to help victims. We want the sentencing system to be punitive and also to focus on rehabilitation. The NDP will always insist on this because these people will return to society. I would prefer them to be good citizens and not bad citizens who take to crime again. We must look at the whole picture. The government has to stop compartmentalizing.

I would like to once again thank the member for Langley for introducing a very important bill that has our support at this stage.

• (1130)

[English]

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to enumerate some of the goals of the justice system, because it is important that we place legislation dealing with criminal offences and so on within the context of the principles that guide the justice system. We could say that the point of the justice system is, first, to reinforce acceptable norms of behaviour; second, to protect society from those who have proven that their actions can cause harm; and third, to ensure that only the guilty pay for their crimes and that the innocent are not convicted. These seem to be, in general, the overriding goals of our justice system, a system that has evolved slowly but surely over centuries.

It turns out that because the justice system is focusing on these three principles, often the interests of victims are ignored, albeit unintentionally. Bill C-489 would attempt to provide some assistance to victims.

Bill C-489 would deal mostly with sexual offences, though not exclusively, as I understand it. Sexual offences create a unique kind of vulnerability among the victims. They are a unique kind of violation compared to, for example, car theft or house break-ins when individuals are not at home. Both of those crimes create a terrible sense of vulnerability as well, but we are talking here of sexual offences and the particular sense of vulnerability they create.

Private Members' Business

I agree with the hon. member that the interests of victims of sexual crimes have often been overlooked in our criminal justice system. Liberals support the intent of Bill C-489. We are not certain that the bill would bring about meaningful progress in all cases for victims or prospective victims of sexual crimes. I say "prospective" victims, because the bill would also deal with recognizance orders, where an individual has not committed a criminal act but poses a threat to another person.

We support sending the bill to committee to ascertain its merits in attaining a goal that, obviously, we all share in this House.

I understand that the bill is motivated by the MP for Langley's particular experience with some victims in his riding. In fact, the member stated:

[A] sex offender...was permitted to serve House arrest right next door to his young victim. In another case, the sex offender served House arrest across the street from the victim. In both cases, the young victims lived in fear and were re-victimized every time they saw their attacker.

Obviously, that situation, which the hon. member for Langley described, leaves all members in disbelief and with a view that something should be done.

Bill C-489 would introduce two prohibitions through amendments to two laws. Number one, it would amend the Criminal Code, and number two, it would amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act.

In terms of Criminal Code changes, as I understand it, the bill would deal with subsection 161(1) of the Criminal Code, which allows conditions to be placed on offenders who receive conditional discharges for sexual offences. This discharge is sometimes granted in cases where the offence carries no minimum sentence and a maximum possible sentence of less than 14 years. In this case, as I understand it, the accused would not have a criminal record if all of the conditions imposed as part of the conditional discharge were respected.

● (1135)

Bill C-489 seeks to add to the list of conditions that may be imposed by a judge. This is a very specific list, and as I understand it, the judge cannot impose conditions beyond this list. It is important that a specific point be made in adding this condition, because it is not something the judge could impose if he or she saw fit. We are talking about the condition that an offender must be no closer than two kilometres from the house where he or she knows or ought to know that the victim is alone. Similarly, another condition would be that the offender would not be allowed to be in a private vehicle with any person under the age of 16 without his or her guardians' consent.

It is important to note that the list of possible conditions in this instance is finite. There is no flexibility here for the judge to impose other conditions beyond those listed. Therefore, this is the only place where adding conditions might make sense, since it gives the sentencing judge the ability to prohibit the offender from living near the victim. As I said, it is important to specify the condition, because there is no latitude for the judge to impose it.

In the bill there is also a restriction on contacting victims. I am not sure if it pertains to those who have committed sexual offences. The

bill extends the list of conditions the court must, or shall, prescribe for offenders on probation.

At the moment, section 732.1 of the code has two sets of conditions. One set is conditions the judge shall impose. The second set is conditions the judge may impose.

In this case, the bill would add a new "shall" condition. The court would have to impose this condition on an offender, for example, who is on probation or is under a conditional sentence. If it chose not to impose the condition, the court would have to explain, in writing, why it was not choosing to add this condition.

We understand the intent of this part of the bill. What I would say is that, at the moment, the list of possible conditions for probation orders and conditional sentences both include "such other reasonable conditions as the court considers desirable." In other words, in this case, the judge has the latitude to impose conditions that are not specifically prescribed on a list. Presumably, the court could already order offenders not to have contact with their victims or not to visit certain places, if it saw fit to do so.

The point I am trying to make is that unlike the first amendment, about staying within two kilometres of where the victim would be residing, in this case, we have to ask ourselves if this particular amendment to the Criminal Code is necessary, given that the court already has the latitude to impose this condition.

I congratulate the hon. member for bringing this bill forward. I know that he is attempting to address a very serious flaw in our criminal justice system. I look forward to discussing and studying the bill at committee so that we can see and understand the extent to which the bill achieves its stated goals.

● (1140)

Ms. Candice Bergen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very privileged to rise today to speak in support of private member's Bill C-489, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (restrictions on offenders), introduced by my colleague, the member of Parliament for Langley.

I want to begin by congratulating the bill's sponsor for the work he has put into this very important piece of legislation. I believe it is entirely consistent with our government's commitment to making our streets and communities safer for Canadians and to better meeting the needs and concerns of victims.

The bill's objective is clear. It proposes to enhance the protection of victims and witnesses and to prevent their re-victimization when an offender is released into the community. It addresses concerns expressed by victims and witnesses across Canada that they should not have to feel threatened by the prospect of an offender watching them, following them, phoning them, or attempting to contact them in any way once they are released into the community. The bill meets this objective by targeting existing provisions that currently provide authority for conditions to be placed on offenders after they have been convicted of a criminal offence, or in some cases, if there is reason to believe that they will commit a child sexual offence.

Private Members' Business

Generally speaking, the purpose of these types of existing conditions is to ensure public safety and the successful reintegration of the offender into the community. They are imposed at various stages of the process, such as at sentencing; for child sexual offender prohibition orders, probation orders and conditional sentence orders; just prior to release from prison on parole or conditional release orders; and before someone is charged, but there is a reasonable belief that he or she may commit a child sexual offence while under a peace bond.

Statistics Canada data indicates that about 105,000 or more orders per year may be affected if Bill C-489 becomes law. Our government will be supporting the bill while proposing amendments to ensure clarity and consistency and to take into account recent Criminal Code amendments.

I would like to take a few moments to consider the first order Bill C-489 proposes to amend, section 161 of the Criminal Code prohibition order. Under this section, at the time of sentencing an individual convicted of a listed sexual offence against a child under the age of 16, the court must consider imposing listed prohibitions, such as not attending public parks, school yards and other places where children are often present. While the current provision makes it mandatory for the court to consider these conditions, the court retains the discretion not to impose the order. The prohibition order takes effect upon the offender's release into the community and can last up to the lifetime of the offender.

First, the bill would require the court to consider imposing a geographical condition restricting the offender from being within two kilometres of any dwelling house in which a victim could reasonably be expected to be present without a parent or guardian. Second, it would require a court to also consider prohibiting the offender from being in a private vehicle with any child under the age of 16 without a parent or guardian.

It is possible, however, that this two-kilometre limit may be challenging to implement, something I believe the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights should consider when it studies the bill.

I also agree that a child sexual offender should not have unsupervised access to a child. In fact, members will recall that the Safe Streets and Communities Act amended section 161 of the Criminal Code by adding two new conditions: prohibiting the offender from having any unsupervised contact with a child under age 16 and prohibiting the offender from having unsupervised use of the Internet.

The bill before us would also amend both the probation and conditional sentence provisions of the Criminal Code by prohibiting the offender from communicating with the victim, witnesses or any other person identified in the order or from going to any place specified in the order.

These proposed new conditions would be mandatory whenever a sentence included a probation or conditions sentence order, with two exceptions. First, the court could choose not to impose the condition if the identified person in the order consented. Second, the court could decide not to impose the condition where it found that

exceptional circumstances existed. In the latter case, the court would be required to provide written reasons explaining this decision.

This proposed approach would provide the court with some flexibility, which I believe is needed. It is possible, however, that requiring written reasons for declining to make the order in exceptional circumstances may have some impact on the day-to-day operations of the courts. I am also aware that similar provisions exist elsewhere in the Criminal Code and instead require reasons to be stated on the record. This, too, is something I believe the justice committee will no doubt take into consideration and look at when it is studying the bill.

● (1145)

The bill also proposes to include similar conditions for section 810.1 of the Criminal Code, recognizing orders often referred to as peace bonds. These are imposed where it is reasonably feared that the defendant will commit one of the enumerated sexual offences against a child under the age of 16. The bill proposes to amend this provision to require the court to consider imposing a condition prohibiting any form of communication between the defendant and any individual named by the court, or prohibiting going to any specified place, unless the named individual consents or unless the court finds, as I mentioned, exceptional circumstances exist to permit such contact.

I agree that the court must consider these types of conditions, and I look forward to this proposal being reviewed in more detail at the committee to ensure that the provision will function as the sponsor of the bill has intended.

Finally, the bill would also provide the authority for imposing specific types of non-contact conditions under conditional release orders pursuant to the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, which includes parole orders, statutory release orders and orders for temporary absence from federal penitentiaries. Specifically, the bill proposes to amend section 133 of the Corrections and Conditional Release Act to require the Parole Board of Canada or other releasing authority to impose conditions that prohibit contact with a witness, victim or other specified person, or from going to specific places unless there is consent or there are exceptional circumstances for not doing so. For the same reasons I have already mentioned, I do support the proposal in Bill C-489.

The sponsor of the bill, the member for Langley, has explained why he introduced the bill, namely because the safety and well-being of victims in his riding were not being taken into consideration. Indeed, if it is happening in his riding, we know it is happening in other parts of the country.

The victims were not being taken into consideration when decisions were being made regarding the release of offenders into his community. I agree that Bill C-489 responds to these concerns and would help to enable victims, their families, witnesses and other individuals to feel safe in their homes and in their communities when these offenders are released back into the community.

Private Members' Business

Moreover, the bill is consistent with our government's commitment to make Canada's streets and communities safer by holding violent criminals accountable and by increasing the efficiency of our justice system. It is also very consistent with our government's commitment to giving victims of crime a stronger voice, one that can be heard, listened to and given consideration in our criminal justice system.

We support Bill C-489. I look forward to other members of the House supporting it. We can study it further in committee.

• (1150)

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I speak today about Bill C-489, an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (restrictions on offenders). It is a privilege to speak on behalf of my constituents of Surrey North about this important bill. As my hon. colleague, the member for Gatineau, has pointed out in a previous speech, it is rare that we as MPs have the opportunity to discuss something that has a tangible outcome for our constituents. It is a privilege to be able to bring a Surrey North perspective to this debate.

The NDP has a solid history of advocating for survivors of violent crimes, particularly in reference to gendered violence and violence against children.

In my own riding, offenders who are released from detention have moved into neighbourhoods where constituents are worried for their safety and the safety of their families.

My predecessor NDP MP, Penny Priddy, along with other MPs from British Columbia, previously proposed measures to assist municipalities in the management of violent offenders. They have called for federal funding for communities that must pay extraordinary costs to monitor these offenders, to support mental health facilities and addiction services, and to provide appropriate housing for the reintegration process. Lack of funding has not prevented hard-working professionals from addressing this concern. We have seen from the federal side, over the last number of years, a downloading of a number of services to the provinces and, eventually, to the municipalities.

However, Surrey's crime reduction strategy has been heralded as the most comprehensive community-based initiative intended to reduce delinquency and re-offence. It builds community capacity to address crime while providing rehabilitation and reintegration assistance to the offenders.

Surrey's program has been particularly successful because of the extensive collaboration between law enforcement and correction services, non-profit organizations, the Surrey school board, the Surrey Board of Trade and other community organizations. I am also grateful for the professionals who work in rehabilitation and half-way house services, and I encourage a perspective of rehabilitation and social integration in our justice system.

The bill proposes restricting certain offenders from being within two kilometres of a house where a victim is present without a parent or a guardian, or from being in a vehicle with a person who is under the age of 16 years old without the presence of a parent or a guardian. It also would potentially prevent certain offenders from communicating with any victim, witness or any other person

identified in a probation order, or from going anywhere specified in the order, except in accordance with specified conditions.

This is an important bill for violent crime survivors' rights, and it must be examined with the needs of survivors in mind. Along with my NDP colleagues, I am in favour of Bill C-489, as we are in favour of any proposal that would protect vulnerable members of our society.

Although well intentioned, the structure of the justice system often retraumatizes the very people it is trying to protect. It is well documented that witnesses and survivors, particularly of gendered crimes and cases involving children, are revictimized throughout the justice process, particularly when the victim must confront the alleged offender at trial.

Once the ordeal is over, survivors can begin their healing journey. However, imagine a survivor's shock when the offender returns to the neighbourhood. The retraumatization of having to see this person every day could undoubtedly lead to increased mental health issues and challenges to the healing of the survivor.

Although victims understand that offenders will eventually be released, it is imperative that they be informed of the release and the relocation.

Research has proven that knowledge about the offender and the rehabilitation of such can be incorporated into the psychological healing journey of the survivor. The knowledge that the offender is taking steps to address the reasons for his or her crime could be relieving to some survivors.

Furthermore, information on the offender's relocation is essential to the development of a safety plan and a general feeling of security.

However, as with any proposal that would affect Canadian lives, we need to ensure that the bill would offer suitable solutions.

• (1155)

The NDP proposes that there be extensive consultations with victim rights groups to ensure that Bill C-489 offers adequate and appropriate protection for survivors of violence. I am particularly interested in gaining the perspective of organizations in my community, such as the Surrey Women's Centre, The Centre for Child Development and Options Community Services. By talking to these front-line service providers, families and local enforcement agencies, we can gauge whether the bill, in its current form, would address the needs of the most vulnerable.

Throughout our discussions today, we need to be conscious of the fact that most crimes are unreported, particularly sexual assaults, and if they are reported, often survivor stories are not believed. Contrary to the "stranger danger" myth, the University of Toronto reports that in as many as 85% of sexual assault cases, the survivors know their attackers. As found by Calgary Communities Against Sexual Abuse, if children are the target of violence, in 75% of the cases they know the offender, who is usually a relative or family member.

Private Members' Business

Power imbalance between the victim and offender and even the victim and justice services, as well as societal reception of certain crimes, often averts survivors from reporting. This means that many survivors are forced to relive their trauma without closure, justice and adequate support services. If the offender is a close relative, friend or community member, the survivor may be forced to continue to see the offender on a regular basis, reliving the trauma first experienced and making him or her increasingly vulnerable to further violence.

Today we may not be able to change the lives of survivors of unreported crimes. However, through a debate in the House, we have the power to make a real change in the lives of those people who we can help. We need to do what we can here in the House to say that the retraumatization and revictimization of survivors of violence, particularly women, youth and children, is not okay. We need to protect survivors and empower them to continue their journey of healing.

I encourage my hon. colleagues in the House to reflect on these ideas while remaining conscious of the power we have in our positions as members of Parliament. We need to use this power to support survivors of violent crimes and continue to support tangible solutions for prevention, the justice system and protection of victims rights.

I encourage members of the justice committee to examine this bill further, to look at ways we can protect victims and provide services to victims of crime.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before I recognize the hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie, I will let him know that there remains approximately six minutes in the time allotted for private members' business. Of course, he will have the remaining time available when the House returns to debate on this question.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-489, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act.

I would first like to congratulate my colleague, the hon. member for Langley, on his initiative. We in the NDP understand that steps have been taken for both victims and witnesses. We understand where he is coming from on this. We know he met with people in his riding who went to see him to explain what a real problem this is.

As long as I have been a member of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, along with my hon. colleague from Gatineau, we have seen a great deal of discussion and many bills on this matter. Quite frankly, having moved over to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights from the Standing Committee on Finance, we can understand much better and see the concrete impact this could have on victims.

The NDP has always been in favour of victim protection and we still are, which is why we are supporting the bill. We want to study it at the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

Why do we want to study it? We are seeing more and more private members' bills being used to advance the government's agenda. We

are not the only ones to say so. It is being widely reported in the media. Why is the government doing that? That is what we want to know and we think it is worth looking into the process. Again, this is not about taking away from or attacking the member for Langley's bill, but about how the process is being used.

This bill addresses something rather important in that it would amend the Criminal Code and related legislation. In this case, we know that the Conservative government is being sued by Edgar Schmidt, who used to work at Justice Canada. He claims that the government was not obeying the law and not fulfilling its obligations to ensure that government bills are consistent with the charter.

What is more, with the Conservatives, the cost of justice is at a record high because the government has to defend its bills in court. We are talking about \$5 billion. That is quite a bit of money just to get the government to fulfill its legal obligations.

Again, we want to know why a private members' bill is being used to introduce something that is already part of the government's law and order agenda.

The Minister of Justice has really pushed this agenda. It is not necessarily the government doing this. It is backbenchers who are introducing these bills.

To come back to Bill C-489, I want to say that it has good intentions in that it seeks to protect victims. The bill would ensure that a judge hearing a case is required to impose certain obligations. The judge would have to make an order prohibiting certain offenders from being within two kilometres of a dwelling house where the victim is present without a parent, say, the father. This is very important, as it was something that was raised by the Office of the Federal Ombudsman for Victims of Crime.

● (1200)

[*English*]

In his report it was mentioned that "...it might help a victim to feel more at ease if they were informed of a local instruction placed on the offender that prohibited him or her from going within a certain distance of the victim's residence."

One thing that we will need to look at is how the two kilometres would apply. I heard the member of Parliament for Langley mention that he went from five kilometres to two kilometres. When we look at what happens specifically in certain regions, two kilometres basically means that the person would have to be evacuated from where he or she lived. This is something we need to look at in the justice committee.

Again, I applaud and commend the member for thinking of victims. On this side, we also understand that we need to protect victims and we will look at the bill in more detail in the justice committee.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie will have four minutes remaining when the members resume debate on the motion now before the House.

*Points of Order**[English]*

Is the hon. government whip rising on a point?

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I offer the following motion:

That, during the debate pursuant to Standing Order 81(4) in relation to the consideration of Votes in the Main Estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014, no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair and, within each 15-minute period, each party may allocate time to one or more of its Members for speeches or for questions and answers, provided that, in the case of questions and answers, the Minister's answer approximately reflect the time taken by the question, and provided that, in the case of speeches, Members of the party to which the period is allotted may speak one after the other.

● (1205)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Does the Chief Government Whip have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The time provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired and the order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

*[English]***EXTENSION OF SITTING HOURS**

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC) moved:

That, notwithstanding any Standing or Special Order or usual practice of the House, commencing upon the adoption of this Order and concluding on Friday, June 21, 2013:

(a) the ordinary hour of daily adjournment shall be 12 midnight, except on Fridays;

(b) when a recorded division is demanded, in relation to a proceeding which has been interrupted pursuant to the provisions of an order made under Standing Order 78(3) or pursuant to Standing Orders 61(2) or 66(2), (i) before 2 p.m. on a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday, it shall stand deferred until the conclusion of oral questions at that day's sitting, or (ii) after 2 p.m. on a Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday, or at any time on a Friday, it shall stand deferred until the conclusion of oral questions at the next sitting day that is not a Friday;

(c) when a recorded division, which would have ordinarily been deemed deferred to immediately before the time provided for Private Members' Business on a Wednesday, is demanded, the said division is deemed to have been deferred until the conclusion of oral questions on the same Wednesday;

(d) when a recorded division is to be held, except recorded divisions deferred to the conclusion of oral questions or to the ordinary hour of daily adjournment, the

bells to call in the Members shall be sounded for not more than thirty minutes; and

(e) when a motion for the concurrence in a report from a standing, standing joint or special committee is moved, the debate shall be deemed to have been adjourned upon the conclusion of the period for questions and comments following the speech of the mover of the motion, provided that the debate shall be resumed in the manner ordinarily prescribed by Standing Order 66(2).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to the government's motion proposing that we work a bit of overtime in the coming weeks here in the House.

Government Motion No. 17 proposes to do three things: first, provide that we can sit to as late as midnight each night to do our job; second, to manage the votes so that they take place in an orderly fashion that is not too disruptive to the lives of parliamentarians; third, ensure that concurrence motions can be dealt with and considered without disrupting the work of the committees and of this House itself.

It has been an honour for me to serve as government House leader for the past two years, and indeed, for 18 months during a previous Parliament. Throughout that time I have always worked to have the House operating in what I call a productive, orderly and hard-working fashion.

Canadians expect their members of Parliament to get things done, to work hard—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. opposition House leader is rising on a point.

* * *

POINTS OF ORDER

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I apologize for interrupting my colleague just at the beginning of his speech on the justification for the motion that he has just presented to the House, but we have a point of order that we need to raise because I think it establishes a couple of important things for you, as Speaker, to determine before we get into the context and the particulars of this motion.

Specifically, I will be citing Standing Order 13, which says:

Whenever the Speaker is of the opinion that a motion offered to the House is contrary to the rules and privileges of Parliament, the Speaker shall apprise the House thereof immediately, before putting the question thereon, and quote the Standing Order or authority applicable to the case.

This is the standing order that we cite, because we have looked at the motion the government has presented here today with some notice given last week.

● (1210)

[Translation]

This motion goes against the Standing Orders and certainly the spirit of Parliament. The government is not allowed to break the rules of Parliament that protect the rights of the minority, the opposition and all members of the House of Commons who have to do their jobs for the people they represent. This motion is very clearly contrary to the existing Standing Orders.

Points of Order

I have some good examples to illustrate this. In my opinion, there is no urgency that would justify the government's heavy-handed tactics to prevent members from holding a reasonable debate on its agenda. I say "agenda", but for a long time now it has been difficult to pin down what this government's agenda is exactly. This is nothing new.

The motion comes to us today at a difficult time, but just because the government held a brief caucus meeting and is facing numerous problems and a few scandals, it is not justified in violating the Standing Orders of the House of Commons. No one would accept those excuses. There is no historical basis for the government to use the Standing Orders in this way. That does not work.

[*English*]

There are a few important things we need to point out. One is that it behooves us to have some explanation of what this motion actually does. For those of us who do not intimately follow the rules and history of Parliament, it can be quite confusing not in terms of the intention of what the government has read but certainly in the implications. It needs some translation, not French to English or English to French, but translation as to what it actually means for the House of Commons. That is why we believe a point of order exists for this motion.

The motion essentially would immediately begin something that would ordinarily begin in a couple of weeks, which is for the House to sit until midnight to review legislation. This is somewhat ironic from a government that has a bad history with respect to moving legislation correctly through the process and allowing us to do our work, which is what we are here to do on behalf of Canadians.

I am not alone in seeing that the government has shown the intention of having some urgency with respect to 23 bills, 14 of which have not even been introduced since the last election. Suddenly there is great urgency, when in fact it is the government that has set the agenda. The urgency is so great that it has to fundamentally change the rules of how we conduct ourselves in this place in response to an urgency that did not exist until this moment.

One has to question the need. Why the panic? Why now, and why over these pieces of legislation? Are they crucial to Canada's economic well-being? Is it to restore the social safety net that the government has brutalized over the last number of years? What is the panic and what is the urgency?

Context sets everything in politics, and the context that the government exists under right now is quite telling. Every time I have had to stand in this place raising points of order and countering the closure and time allocation motions that the government uses, I am often stating and citing that this is a new low standard for Parliament. I have thought at times that there was not much more it could do to this place to further erode the confidence of Canadians or further erode the opportunity for members of Parliament to speak, yet it has again invented something new, and here we are today debating that motion.

That is why we believe that Standing Order 13 needs to be called. It is because it is very clear that when a motion is moved that is contrary to the rules and privileges of Parliament—which is what I would underline, as it is the important part—the Speaker must

involve himself or herself in the debate and ask that the debate no longer proceed.

The privileges of members of Parliament are not the privileges that are being talked about by our friends down the hall to falsely claim money that did not exist or privileges of limo rides and trips around the world. The privileges of Parliament that speak constitutionally to the need for Parliament are that members of Parliament have the opportunity to scrutinized and debate government bills.

Just before the riding week, we saw the government introduce another time allocation on a bill that had received exactly 60 minutes of debate. Somehow the Conservatives felt that had exhausted the conversation on a bill they had sat on for years, and suddenly the panic was on. We are seeing this pattern again and again with a government that is facing more scandal.

I was looking through the news today. Every morning I start my day with the news and we consider what we should ask the government in question period. There are some days when the focus can be difficult and one may not be sure what the most important issue of the day is. However, the challenge for us today as the official opposition is that, as there are so many scandals on so many fronts, how do we address them all within the short time we have during question period or in debate on bills.

I listened to my friend for Langley, who has been somewhat in the news of late on his attempt to speak on issues he felt were important to his constituents. We saw him move a new private member's bill today. He withdrew the former bill, and now he is moving one again. The New Democrats will support the bill going to committee for study because we think there are some options and availability for us to look at the legislation and do our job.

Whether it is muzzling of their own MPs and the Conservatives' attempt to muzzle all MPs in the House of Commons, or using private members' bills to avoid the scrutiny that is applied to government legislation, and one important piece of that scrutiny is the charter defence of the legislation and so, in a sense, the Conservatives are using the back door to get government legislation through and move their agenda in another way, or the omnibus legislation, which has received so much controversy in Canada as the government has increasingly abused the use of omnibus legislation, or the F-35 fiasco, or the recent Auditor General's report, or the former parliamentary budget officer who was under much abuse and the new Parliamentary Budget Officer who has asked for the same things he did, or infamously, prorogation, time and time again the pattern is the same. The government has complete disdain for the House.

Whether it be the scandals in the Senate, or the China FIPA accord, or the recent problems with the Prime Minister's former chief of staff, or the employment insurance scandals, or the \$3 billion missing, or the 300,000 jobs that have not been replaced, the government keeps trying to avoid proper scrutiny out of embarrassment. However, the House of Commons exists for one thing and one thing alone, which is to hold the government to account.

Points of Order

The government will make some claims that the urgency right now is because there has not been enough progress on legislation. Therefore, the Conservatives have to hit the panic button and would have the House sit until midnight, which has consequences beyond just being a late night, and I will get into those consequences in a moment because they support our notion that it infringes upon the entitlements of members of Parliament to debate legislation properly.

The Conservatives' record shows, and this is not speculation or conspiracy, that when they ram legislation through, they more often than not get it wrong. That is not just expensive for the process of law making, but it is expensive for Canadians. These things often end up in court costing millions and millions of dollars and with victims of their own making. The scandal that exists in the Senate is absolutely one of their own making. The Prime Minister can point the finger where he likes, but he appointed those senators.

Specific to the point of order I am raising, this motion would lower the amount of scrutiny paid to legislation. It would allow the government extended sittings, which are coming in the second week of June anyway, as the Standing Orders currently exist, to allow the government to do that, but the Conservatives want to move the clock up and have more legislation rammed through the House.

Also, as you would know, Mr. Speaker, the order of our day includes concurrence reports from committee, which allow the House to debate something that happened in committee which can sometimes be very critical, and many are moved from all sides. However, they would not get started until midnight under the Conservatives' new rules. Therefore, we would study and give scrutiny on what happened at committee from midnight until two or three o'clock in the morning.

As well, emergency debates would not start until midnight. Just recently we had a debate, Mr. Speaker, that your office agreed to allow happen, which was quite important to those implicated. We were talking about peace and war and Canada's role in the world. It was a critical emergency debate that certainly went into the night. However, the idea is that we would take emergency debates that the Speaker's office and members of Parliament felt were important and start them at midnight and somehow they would be of the same quality as those started at seven o'clock in the evening.

The scrutiny of legislation has become much less important than the government moving its agenda through, which is an infringement on our privilege as members of Parliament. The Conservatives' so-called urgency, their panic, is not a justification for overriding the privileges that members of Parliament hold dear.

• (1215)

As for progress, just recently we moved the nuclear terrorism bill through, Bill S-9.

We also had much debate but an improvement on Bill C-15, the military justice bill, to better serve our men and women in the forces. The original drafting was bad. The Conservatives wanted to force it forward and we resisted. My friend from St. John's worked hard and got an amendment through that would help those in the military who found themselves in front of a tribunal.

We have the divorce in civil marriages act, which has been sitting and sitting. It would allow people in same-sex marriages to file for

and seek divorce. All we have offered to the government is one vote and one speaker each. The government refuses to bring the bill forward and I suspect it is because it would require a vote. It is a shame when a government resists the idea that a vote would be a good thing for members of Parliament to declare their intentions on, certainly something as important as civil liberties and rights for gay men and women.

I mentioned earlier why, in the infringement of this privilege, it causes great harm and distress not just to Parliament but to the country.

I asked my team to pull up the list of bills that were so badly written that they had to be either withdrawn or completely rewritten at committee and even in the Senate which, God knows, is a terrible strategy for any legislation.

There was the infamous or famous Bill C-30, the Internet snooping bill, which the Minister of Public Safety said something to the effect that either people were with the government or they were with child pornographers, which may be an example of the worst framing in Canadian political history. There has probably been worse, but that was pretty bad. The Conservatives had to kill the bill.

We have also seen Bill C-10, Bill C-31, Bill C-38 and Bill C-42, all of these bills were so badly written that oftentimes the government had to amend them after having voted for them. After saying they were perfect and ramming them through, invoking closure and shutting down debate, the Conservatives got to committee and heard from people who actually understood the issue and realized the law they had written would be illegal and would not work or fix the problem that was identified, and so they had to rewrite it. That is the point of Parliament. That is the point of the work we do.

We have also seen bills that have been challenged at great expense before the courts. Former Bill C-2, the tackling violent crime act, with huge sections of the government's main anti-crime agenda, was challenged and defeated in court.

Bill C-38, arbitrarily eliminating backlog for skilled workers, was challenged and defeated.

Bill C-7, Senate term limits, was after years just now deferred to the Supreme Court. It is called "kicking it down the road".

Also, there are Bill C-6, Bill C-33 and others, and there are those that are being crafted and debated right now that are going to have serious problems.

The essential thrust of our intention is in identifying the rules that govern us, and specifically Standing Order 13. The government has time and again talked about accountability before the Canadian people and talked about doing things better than its predecessors in the Liberal Party, the government that became so arrogant and so unaccountable to Canadians that the Conservatives threw it out of office. History repeats itself if one does not learn true lessons from history.

Points of Order

As I mentioned, Standing Order 27(1) already exists, and it allows the government to do exactly what we are talking about, but not starting until the last 10 sitting days. The Conservatives have said that there is so much on their so-called agenda that they have to do this early, allowing for less scrutiny, allowing for emergency debates to start at midnight, allowing for concurrence debates that come from committees to start at midnight and go until two, three or four o'clock in the morning.

This is contrary to the work of parliamentarians. If the Conservatives are in such a rush, why do they not negotiate? Why do they not actually come to the table and do what parliamentarians have done throughout time, which is offer the to and fro of any proper negotiation between reasonable people?

We have moved legislation forward. My friend across the way was moving an important motion commemorating war heroes. We worked with that member and other members to ensure the bill, which came from the Senate, made it through speedy passage.

Parliament can work if the Conservatives let it work, but it cannot work if they keep abusing it. Canadians continue to lose faith and trust in the vigour of our work and the ability to hold government to account. We see it time and again, and I am sure, Mr. Speaker, you have as well, in talking to constituents who say that they are not sure what goes on here anymore, that it just seems like government will not answer questions, that everyday they ask sincere and thoughtful questions and the Conservatives do not answer. Bills get shut down with motions of closure.

Let us look at the current government's record.

Thirty-three times, the Conservatives have moved time allocation on legislation, an all-time high for any government in Canadian history. Through war and peace, through good and bad, no government has shut down debate in Parliaments more than the current one.

● (1220)

Ninety-nine point three per cent of all amendments moved by the opposition have been rejected by the government. Let us take a look at that stat for a moment. That suggests that virtually 100% of the time, the government has been perfectly right on the legislation it moves. All the testimony from witnesses and experts, comments from average Canadians, when moving amendments to the legislation before us, 99.3% of the time the government rejects it out of hand. It ends up in court. It ends up not doing what it was meant to do.

Ten Conservative MPs have never spoken to legislation at all. I will note one in particular. The Minister of Finance, who has not bothered to speak to his own bills, including the omnibus legislation, Bill C-38 and Bill C-45, which caused so much controversy. He did not bother to stand and justify his actions. I find it deplorable and it is not just me, Canadians as well, increasingly so.

This is my final argument. We cannot allow this abuse to continue. This pattern has consequences, not just for what happens here today or tomorrow, but in the days, weeks, months and years to come and the Parliaments to come. If we keep allowing for and not standing up in opposition to bad ideas and draconian measures, we in a sense condone them.

We say that Parliament should become less irrelevant. We think that is wrong. We think what the government is doing is fundamentally wrong. It is not right and left; it is right and wrong. When the government is wrong in its treatment and abuse of Canada's Parliament, that affects all Canadians, whatever their political persuasion. We built this place out of bricks and mortar to do one thing: to allow the voice of Canadians to be represented, to speak on behalf of those who did not have a voice and to hold the government of the day to account. Lord knows the government needs that more than anything. It needs a little adult supervision from time to time to take some of those suggestions and put a little, as we say, water in its wine.

It has the majority. This is the irony of what the government is doing. In moving more time allocation than any government in history and shutting down debate more than any government in history and using what it is today, it speaks to weakness not strength. The Conservatives have the numbers to move legislation through if they saw fit, but they do not. They move legislation, they say it is an agenda and they hold up a raft of bills.

● (1225)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. I remind the hon. member that the question before the House right now and the arguments that the member has put forward are in respect to the point of order respecting, essentially, section 13 of the Standing Orders.

While members have much liberty to present these arguments in respect of the point of order, there is also a question before the House that members will no doubt have the opportunity to speak to. Therefore, I wonder if the member could perhaps wrap up his arguments specifically relating to his point of order, then perhaps we could get on to debate some of these other questions as the debate may continue.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, your role as Speaker and all the Speakers that hold your office is, as has been stated many times in our references and standing orders, to protect the role of members of Parliament and certainly to protect the minority that is in this place to allow for some fairness, to prevent cheating and bending the rules to the point of breaking.

My point is that the government has so many times abused this place and its fundamental democratic values, which are to engage in debate for the betterment of the country and to hold the government's legislation and spending to account. We have seen the Conservatives too often defer to that weak place of hiding, of using closure, of shutting down the conversation rather than opening it up to Canadians.

It will be the role of the official opposition, and I contend it is the role of the Speaker's office as well, to ensure, regardless of any political agenda or political scandals going on or any panic happening within the government's chamber, that this place, in which we seek to represent Canadians each and every day, must remain a place that is above that. It should hold the government to account each and every day with the authenticity and sincerity that are Canadians values. We, as New Democrats, will do that each and every day, regardless of the bully tactics that they use.

Points of Order

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I was surprised by this point of order, but I suppose I should not have been surprised that the NDP would pull out all the stops to try to avoid having to work hard in this House of Commons, to try to use every device it can think of and every procedure and every tactic it can think of to avoid having to work a little bit of overtime and stay here until midnight.

I suppose if we were unionized around here, maybe we would not have to work extra hard or we would demand overtime for it. I suppose that is the attitude of the NDP, as it consistently represents those kinds of views around here.

In terms of a point of order, what I heard was very thin and very lacking. First of all, on the substance of it, the entire complaint seemed to be an argument that there is insufficient debate and scrutiny of bills around here, and yet the argument is “let us not have more debate; let us have not as much opportunity for scrutiny; let us not work quite as hard up here; let us do a little bit less”. I fail to see how that is somehow a point of order.

In fact what we are trying to do is exactly the opposite, to ensure we have adequate debate, to ensure we have an opportunity to consider bills, and to ensure we do the work Canadians sent us here to do.

On the actual merits of the point of order—and I noticed there was nothing there—let us go through what the rules actually say. The green book, O'Brien and Bosc, is quite clear. It says, at page 257:

Besides the permanent Standing Orders, the House may adopt other types of written rules for limited periods of time.

That is what we are doing here. The House can do that. The House can do that on a government motion. The House can do that by a majority vote. That is fully within the rules of this place. That is how it has been practised for many years, decades—centuries one would say—in the Westminster parliamentary system. We are masters of our rules. We make them. That is what the green book says. That is the practice and procedure of this House.

That is what government motion no. 17 says. There is absolutely nothing that I heard from my friend opposite to the contrary.

Further, at page 258, it says:

In addition to the Standing Orders and provisional and sessional orders which form the collected body of written rules, the House may also adopt special orders.

That is what we are doing right now under this motion. It goes on to say:

A frequently used instrument for the conduct of House business, special orders temporarily suspend the “written” Standing Orders.

It goes on to say:

They may apply to a single occasion or to such period of time as may be specified.

This is the normal practice of the House, something that is done quite often. It is codified to the extent of the last 10 days in the Standing Orders right now, but none of that takes away the ability of this House to set its own rules by a majority vote anytime on a motion.

That is exactly what we are seeking to do here under the rules for presenting motions in this House, and that is what government order no. 17 proposes to do.

Again, I heard absolutely nothing, not one scintilla of contrary argument or evidence. What I heard was a long speech on the NDP's messages of the day. I will get to that in a minute.

I would also go to another one of our authorities, Beauchesne's *Parliamentary Rules and Forms* at page 5, very early on, under the heading “Written Rules”, it says:

Standing, Sessional and Special Orders are the rules and regulations which the House has agreed on for the governance of its own proceedings.

That includes special orders, special orders that are reflected in government motion no. 17, that are reflected in what O'Brien and Bosc refer to.

Further on, in paragraph 8 on that page, it says:

A Special Order may have effect for only a single occasion or such longer term as may be specified.

Again, that is what this motion seeks to do.

It has become the custom in modern times to apply the term Special Order to all rules which have only temporary effect.

Again, that is what we are seeking to do to the end of this parliamentary sitting when we rise before the summer.

It further goes on in Beauchesne's to say:

All rules are passed by the House by a simple majority and are altered, added to, or removed in the same way.

Again, this is what we are seeking to do, fully contemplated by the rules, 100%, and as I said, generations of experience, and yet you, Mr. Speaker, are being asked, for some reason, to toss out all that history and simply say “Nah, we do not want to work late.” That is what the NDP is asking.

●(1230)

Furthermore, in that paragraph, it goes on to say:

There is no procedural reason why any Member cannot introduce a motion to alter the rules...

In the next paragraph, paragraph 10, it says:

Sessional and Special Orders are normally moved by the Government...

Anybody can move it if they can gain favour with the House, but it is normally done by the government.

Clearly, what we are engaging in here is a point of order over whether something that has been accepted forever exists and is allowed and contemplated by the rules. I have gone through citation after citation of where they are specifically contemplated by the rules. Everything within government motion no. 17 complies fully with that.

What I found troubling about my friend's comments is that he did not have any citations to the contrary, rulings to the contrary or evidence to the contrary. In fact, he did not even have any arguments to the contrary other than arguments on the merits on the motion itself, which we are debating.

Basically, what he got up and did, under the guise of pretending it was a point of order, was make a speech on the motion itself and its merits. It is his place to do so—after the government finishes presenting its arguments for it. The rules contemplate that.

Points of Order

In fact, if there is a point of order to be raised or a privilege that has been offended, through this device, he has actually offended the privileges of other members of the House, the government and myself. I am the one who has a point to complain about. He has reversed the order, contemplated by our Standing Orders, in which a debate should proceed here.

Mr. Speaker, you picked up the exact same thing and alluded to it in your remarks. I would not be the least bit surprised if you were to say to him, after I have finished my comments on the main motion itself, that he has already discharged his right of reply and has in fact done so in a fashion that has offended my privileges, has prevented me from presenting my arguments, and presented his arguments himself, first, on the merits of the motion. That is highly improper. I find this an unusual and ironic situation.

The fact remains that he raised not a single citation, historical example or reason in the rules why this motion is not in order. However, every single thing we see in historical practice, in the citations I quoted and in the footnotes that point to earlier examples is that the House has the full right to consider a motion of this type, governing its rules and processes. It is decided by a majority vote. There shall be a debate on it in this fashion if the House wishes to have such a debate and people wish to speak to it. It even outlines the fashion in which that will happen.

I am not personally hurt that he wanted to trump me and go first. I suppose it was a clever way of trying to do that and getting his message out. I am not offended that he did not speak to the merits of the motion, but rather wished to speak to the communications messaging of his party for the day. That is his right as well.

However, the fact is that, on a point of order, one has to look at the evidence and the rules that are in place, and decide it that way. It is quite clear that this motion is entirely in order and properly put. There really is very little to respond to out of his arguments to the contrary.

• (1235)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Does the hon. House Leader of the Official Opposition have something additional to add to the debate on this point of order?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, it is in response to something my colleague said.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): If it is new, the hon. House Leader of the Official Opposition has the floor.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, the member raised it, not I.

I realize that my friend perhaps has short-term or near-term memory loss. However, if you recall, Mr. Speaker, in the times that the House sat all night as the NDP opposed, through vote after vote, the government's draconian omnibus legislation or its anti-worker legislation with respect to Canada Post, hard work has never been a problem for New Democrats, and sitting long has never been a problem for New Democrats when the cause has been right.

My only point is this. He suggested, Mr. Speaker, and I put it through you to him, that he is into long hours and hard work. I may have heard a commitment from him in his comments that the government is expecting to use the full calendar, all the way through to the end of June.

As he will well know, New Democrats throughout Parliament's history have always pursued the calendar to its end, even as other parties have sought to get out of town and hit the barbecue circuit, if that is the commitment my hon. friend is making in reply to my point of order,

I would also suggest to him that perhaps it works that way on his side, but I did not actually check with my communications office or any central command today before I made my point of order. I checked with myself, and I checked with the record as to what the government has done. There is no trumping of his particular message. There is no message of the day on this. This is a message today, and this is a message tomorrow, and this is the message for weeks to come that when they are being anti-democratic and abusing Parliament, we will stand here and resist it.

If he would like to sit until the end of June and use his privilege, which he has demarcated today about midnight sittings, and that is the commitment he is making to Canadians—to work hard, as he said—we will take him at that commitment and we will see him at the end of June.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I thank the hon. government House leader and the hon. opposition House leader for their interventions in this matter. I will take those comments and arguments under advisement and get back to the House if necessary.

Resuming debate, the hon. government House leader.

* * *

EXTENTION OF SITTING HOURS

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I will pick up where I left off. Obviously my hon. friend did not hear this and has not read the motion. I will respond to his macho riposte at the end of his comments by pointing out that the motion would do three things: first, it would provide for us to sit until midnight; second, it would provide a manageable way in which to hold votes in a fashion that works for members of the House; and third, it would provide for concurrence debates to happen and motions to be voted on in a fashion that would not disrupt the work of all the committees of the House and force them to come back here for votes and shut down the work of committees.

Those are the three things the motion would do. In all other respects the Standing Orders remain in place, including the Standing Orders for how long the House sits. Had my friend actually read the motion, he would recognize that the only way in which that Standing Order could then be changed would be by unanimous consent of the House.

The member needs no commitment from me as to how long we will sit. Any member of the House can determine that question, if he or she wishes to adjourn other than the rules contemplate, but the rules are quite clear in what they do contemplate.

As I was saying, the reason for the motion is that Canadians expect their members of Parliament to work hard and get things done on their behalf.

Points of Order

•(1240)

[*Translation*]

Canadians expect their members of Parliament to work hard and get things done on their behalf.

[*English*]

We agree and that is exactly what has happened here in the House of Commons.

However, do not take my word for it; look at the facts. In this Parliament the government has introduced 76 pieces of legislation. Of those 76, 44 of them are law in one form or another. That makes for a total of 58% of the bills introduced into Parliament. Another 15 of these bills have been passed by either the House or the Senate, bringing the total to 77% of the bills that have been passed by one of the two Houses of Parliament. That is the record of a hard-working, orderly and productive Parliament.

More than just passing bills, the work we are doing here is delivering real results for Canadians. However, there is still yet more work to be done before we return to our constituencies for the summer.

During this time our government's top priority has been jobs, economic growth and long-term prosperity. Through two years and three budgets, we have passed initiatives that have helped to create more than 900,000 net new jobs since the global economic recession. We have achieved this record while also ensuring that Canada's debt burden is the lowest in the G7. We are taking real action to make sure the budget will be balanced by 2015. We have also followed through on numerous longstanding commitments to keep our streets and communities safe, to improve democratic representation in the House of Commons, to provide marketing freedom for western Canadian grain farmers and to eliminate once and for all the wasteful and inefficient long gun registry.

Let me make clear what the motion would and would not do. There has been speculation recently, including from my friend opposite, about the government's objectives and motivations with respect to motion no. 17. As the joke goes: Mr. Freud, sometimes a cigar is just a cigar. So it is with today's motion. There is only one intention motivating the government in proposing the motion: to work hard and deliver real results for Canadians.

The motion would extend the hours the House sits from Monday through Thursday. Instead of finishing the day around 6:30 or 7 p.m., the House would sit instead until midnight.

[*Translation*]

This would amount to an additional 20 hours each week. Extended sitting hours is something that happens most years in June. Our government just wants to roll up our sleeves and work a little harder, earlier this year. The motion would allow certain votes to be deferred automatically until the end of question period, to allow for all honourable members' schedules to be a little more orderly.

[*English*]

As I said, all other rules would remain. For example, concurrence motions could be moved, debated and voted upon. Today's motion would simply allow committees to continue doing their work instead

of returning to the House for motions to return to government business and the like. This process we are putting forward would ensure those committees could do their good work and be productive, while at the same time the House could proceed with its business. Concurrence motions could ultimately be dealt with, debated and voted upon.

We are interested in working hard and being productive and doing so in an orderly fashion, and that is the extent of what the motion would do. I hope that the opposition parties would be willing to support this reasonable plan and let it come forward to a vote. I am sure members opposite would not be interested in going back to their constituents to say they voted against working a little overtime before the House rises for the summer, but the first indication from my friend opposite is that perhaps he is reluctant to do that. Members on this side of the House are willing to work extra hours to deliver real results for Canadians.

Some of those accomplishments we intend to pass are: reforming the temporary foreign workers program to put the interests of Canadians first; implementing tax credits for Canadians who donate to charity; enhancing the tax credit for parents who adopt; and extending the tax credit for Canadians who take care of loved ones in their home.

•(1245)

[*Translation*]

We also want to support veterans and their families by improving the determination of veterans' benefits.

[*English*]

Of course, these are some of the important measures from this year's budget and are included in Bill C-60, economic action plan 2013 act, no. 1. We are also working toward results for aboriginals by moving closer to equality for Canadians living on reserves through better standards for drinking water and finally giving women on reserves the same rights and protections other Canadian women have had for decades. Bill S-2, family homes on reserves and matrimonial interests or rights act, and Bill S-8, the safe drinking water for first nations act would deliver on those very important objectives.

We will also work to keep our streets and communities safe by making real improvements to the witness protection program through Bill C-51, the safer witnesses act. I think that delivering these results for Canadians is worth working a few extra hours each week.

[*Translation*]

We will work to bring the Technical Tax Amendments Act, 2012, into law. Bill C-48 would provide certainty to the tax code. It has been over a decade since a bill like this has passed, so it is about time this bill passed. In fact, after question period today, I hope to start third reading of this bill, so perhaps we can get it passed today.

*Points of Order**[English]*

We will also work to bring Bill C-52, the fair rail freight service act, into law. The bill would support economic growth by ensuring that all shippers, including farmers, are treated fairly. Over the next few weeks we will also work, hopefully with the co-operation of the opposition parties, to make progress on other important initiatives.

[Translation]

Bill C-54 will ensure that public safety is the paramount consideration in the decision-making process involving high-risk accused found not criminally responsible on account of mental disorder. This is an issue that unfortunately has affected every region of this country. The very least we can do is let the bill come to a vote and send it to committee where witnesses can testify about the importance of these changes.

[English]

Bill C-49 would create the Canadian museum of history, a museum for Canadians that would tell our stories and present our country's treasures to the world.

[Translation]

Bill S-14, the Fighting Foreign Corruption Act, will do just that by further deterring and preventing Canadian companies from bribing foreign public officials. These amendments will help ensure that Canadian companies continue to act in good faith in the pursuit of freer markets and expanded global trade.

[English]

Bill S-13, the port state measures agreement implementation act, would implement that 2009 treaty by amending the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act to add prohibitions on importing illegally acquired fish.

[Translation]

Tonight we will be voting on Bill S-9, the Nuclear Terrorism Act, which will allow Canada to honour its commitments under international agreements to tackle nuclear terrorism. Another important treaty—the Convention on Cluster Munitions—can be given effect if we adopt Bill S-10, the Prohibiting Cluster Munitions Act.

We will seek to update and modernize Canada's network of income tax treaties through Bill S-17, the Tax Conventions Implementation Act, 2013, by giving the force of law to recently signed agreements between Canada and Namibia, Serbia, Poland, Hong Kong, Luxembourg and Switzerland.

[English]

Among other economic bills is Bill C-56, the combating counterfeit products act. The bill would protect Canadians from becoming victims of trademark counterfeiting and goods made using inferior or dangerous materials that lead to injury or even death. Proceeds from the sale of counterfeit goods may be used to support organized crime groups. Clearly, this bill is another important one to enact.

Important agreements with the provinces of Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador would be satisfied through Bill S-15,

the expansion and conservation of Canada's national parks act, which would, among other things, create the Sable Island national park reserve, and Bill C-61, the offshore health and safety act, which would provide clear rules for occupational health and safety of offshore oil and gas installations.

Earlier I referred to the important work of committees. The Standing Joint Committee on the Scrutiny of Regulations inspired Bill S-12, the incorporation by reference in regulations act. We should see that committee's ideas through by passing this bill. Of course, a quick reading of today's order paper would show that there are yet still more bills before the House of Commons for consideration and passage. All of these measures are important and will improve the lives of Canadians. Each merits consideration and hard work on our part.

In my weekly business statement prior to the constituency week, I extended an offer to the House leaders opposite to work with me to schedule and pass some of the other pieces of legislation currently before the House. I hope that they will respond to my request and put forward at our next weekly meeting productive suggestions for getting things done. Passing today's motion would be a major step toward accomplishing that. As I said in my opening comments, Canadians expect each one of us to come to Ottawa to work hard, vote on bills and get things done.

In closing, I commend this motion to the House and encourage all hon. members to vote for this motion, add a few hours to our day, continue the work of our productive, orderly and hard-working Parliament, and deliver real results for Canadians.

● (1250)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my friend in particular for the final offer he made. I hesitate to negotiate in public what we often try to spend our time at House leaders' meetings doing, as brief as that time sometimes is.

Opposition members have consistently gone to the government with bills that we were interested in supporting, even in an effort to, as my friend says, work hard for Canadians, limit the amount of debate. A bill I mentioned earlier talks about the allowance of civil marriages, so-called gay marriages, a law that was passed by Parliament and opposed by the member's party, allowing for the closure of a loophole in the law to permit those who are married to also seek divorce, which seems a reasonable thing to do.

All we have asked for, in the expediency of the passage of Bill C-32, is one vote, which takes about seven minutes, on average, in this place. We allowed the government to introduce a motion, if it saw fit, to allow one speaker per party. Doing the quick math on that, that would be about an hour and a half. We could see a bill that has been sitting for about 18 months, give or take, to pass completely in this place in an hour and a half, two hours at the outside if we did something slowly. The government has refused it every single time.

Points of Order

The government then claims it has great urgency in the world and that there are other bills to pass that opposition parties have offered to the government. We just passed a technical amendments bill recently and there is an instruments bill that we are looking to pass as well. There has been progress, but what we have seen time and again is an attitude in breaking the historical—and he cannot answer this one, by the way, Mr. Speaker. A majority government, within two years, used time allocation to shut down debate, something Conservatives used to rile against when Liberals did it. The Conservatives have used that same tactic more than any other government in any four or five-year mandate in Canadian history. The Conservatives did it in two and are now turning the bully into the victim and saying that they are somehow victimized by the will of the minority.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I would remind the hon. member we are in questions and comments.

The hon. government House leader.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, on the question of Bill C-32, as I said, we are willing to go even further. We have said in the House in public many times that we are prepared to pass that bill if it is supported by the opposition at all three stages by unanimous consent. It could happen by unanimous consent in the House. Apparently, that is not good enough for the opposition members. As a result, that bill has not yet been passed because they simply have not accepted that offer.

In terms of our overall legislative agenda, there is, as I indicated, a lot of work that needs to be done in the House that we are very pleased to do. One thing we have tried to do in the House is change the approach where time allocation is brought in as a form of shutting down debate, which used to be done in the past, to using it as a fashion to ensure a productive, hard-working approach. For example, on the second-last budget implementation bill, we provided for the longest debate ever in Canadian history on any budget implementation bill in that time allocation motion. This was to allow for full debate but also to allow for certainty that the measures would come into place.

That has been our approach throughout: to give the members the fullest opportunity to participate, to allow a full opportunity for debate, but also to do it in a businesslike fashion where people know that we are going to debate it for a period of time, for a number of days, five, six, seven, whatever the case may be, on a particular bill, and then allow a matter to be voted on. That is why time allocation, of course, has been moved usually at the start of our debates and not toward the end, not after days and days, but, rather, in order to have certainty of scheduling. This is has been the approach of our government, one that is aimed at working hard and delivering results, being productive, hard-working, orderly, and doing the job that Canadians sent us to do by giving people a chance in the House to actually vote on measures before the House.

• (1255)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully just now to the bills that the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons enumerated in his speech. I noted that he did not include Bill C-17, An Act to amend the Air Canada Public Participation Act, which was introduced at first

reading on October 17, 2011, and which we have heard nothing about since.

I was wondering why it was not part of his list.

[*English*]

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I have been encouraged to be reasonable in what I request. In order to identify our priorities, we have focused on the priorities that we believe are the priorities of Canadians.

First and foremost is the priority of the economy. We will see economic bills come front and centre because Canadians want to see that there is a government and a Parliament that is seriously engaged in doing what is important to encourage job creation, economic growth and long-term prosperity. Bills that match what is clearly at the top of our agenda have been the focus of our activity.

Another priority, of course, has been bills to ensure we build a safer and stronger Canada, safer communities. That issue of tackling crime, of making our communities safer, is again one reflected in the bills that we wish to see brought forward, debated and passed by this Parliament.

Then, of course, there are important questions of our national identity.

Unfortunately we cannot pass everything. We heard the opposition House leader complaining that we want to get too much done, that he does not want to work that hard, and that we are pushing too many things through. Unfortunately, we have to be reasonable. We have to find the appropriate balance and choose the priorities that reflect those priorities of Canadians, first and foremost, delivering on the economy.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, all these debates are rather interesting.

With respect to the point of order raised by my colleague, the House Leader of the Official Opposition, and Motion No. 17, I would like to reiterate that we work from morning until night, and even into the wee hours. It is the government's bizarre and twisted rhetoric, not the fact that the sitting hours of the House will be extended, that is cause for concern.

The government is proposing to act on bills that, all of a sudden, are absolutely essential. Time is of the essence. Yet for two years the bills have languished, nothing has been done and the Senate has been on the agenda. Now, with a majority, the government is puffing itself up and proposing to introduce amendments and change things.

My colleague, the House Leader of the Official Opposition, asked a question and I did not hear a specific answer from our colleague opposite. Can the government assure us that the motion moved, Motion No. 17, is not an exercise designed to have the House adjourn earlier because the government is starting to get embarrassed and does not know what else to say to the media outside the House and its members are eager to go and hide in their ridings? Will we be here to work and to do even more, between now and the date set for the House to adjourn for the summer?

*Points of Order**[English]*

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member need only read the motion that is in front of her before she gets up to ask a question about it. Before she gets up to participate in the debate, I encourage her to read it. She will see on its face it would do nothing to change the Standing Orders with regard to the question of the calendar, in terms of when we are sitting here in Ottawa. If she understands that, she understands the answer to that question.

There is nothing in the motion that would provide for a different adjournment date from the Standing Orders. Oddly, I find it very strange that she would get up and ask a question not having actually read the motion right in front of her.

However, that is not surprising, again, from a party that is standing here, saying, “We don’t want to work hard. Please don’t make us stay late. Please, God forbid, we actually have to read the motion in front of us, because that’s too much work. So, I’ll just ask you what it says.”

What it says is very simple, “Let’s get things done for Canadians. Let’s do the work they sent us here to do. Let’s focus on the economy. Let’s create jobs for Canadians. Let’s deliver economic prosperity for Canadians. Let’s do our jobs here in the House of Commons that Canadians want us to do.” They want hard-working parliamentarians. We are trying to deliver that. If the opposition members agree with us, I suppose they will vote for that. If they do not agree that Canadians want hard-working parliamentarians, I suppose they will oppose the motion.

• (1300)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to be very clear. It is interesting. The government House leader talks about getting to work and putting in the time. The Liberal Party is not shy of putting in the time. We are prepared to work as hard, if not harder, than this particular government House leader. In fact, I would challenge the government House leader to be here half the amount of time that I am here, addressing legislation and so forth. That would surprise me.

The government needs to recognize that it is also the responsibility of a majority government to be somewhat—I would argue a whole lot—more democratic in terms of dealing with legislation that comes before the House.

My question for the government House leader is, is he prepared to work hard for Canadians and allow for appropriate debate on the remaining legislation that is on the legislative agenda; in other words, not continue bringing in time allocation and preventing us hard-working members of Parliament from being able to contribute to the debate?

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, I have never heard a legitimate complaint from that member that he has not had ample opportunity to participate in debates. I will respond to his challenge by saying that I will speak when needed in the House, and I will allow other people an opportunity to speak from time to time as well. I will use that to guide my approach.

In terms of our approach, the member heard my answer. Our approach is to provide time for debates to occur to allow for the full participation of members, but also, importantly, to allow votes to

happen and to let decisions be made. Debate is important. However, this should not be a talk shop where all we do is debate. It should also be a place where decisions are made. Canadians sent us here to do work, and that includes the work of actually making decisions. That is what the votes are when we vote in the House of Commons. We will continue to ensure that those votes take place so that bills can be decided upon and progress can be made, for the benefit of Canadians, on the economy and on having safer streets and communities.

[Translation]

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am not very happy about being here. However, I am here because we need to stand up to this government, which believes that Parliament exists only for its benefit and that it is just a place concerned with the government’s problems and accountability.

[English]

It is almost as if a new party came into the House today, as we listen to the Conservative House leader speak. It certainly is not the party that moved prorogation and killed legislation time and again. This new Conservative Party is suddenly interested in not defeating legislation. It could not be the same Conservative Party that has shut down debate in the House of Commons more than any party in Canadian history. It could not be a member of the same party who was speaking here today, talking about opening up debate. The Conservatives have invented a new world for themselves that is fascinating.

I am reflecting on my friend from Langley, who sought to speak in this House on what they call an S. O. 31 statement, which happens just before question period. It is a statement that lasts for about a minute. Usually members of Parliament get up and make a statement about their ridings about some issue that is important to them. My friend from Langley, who sits in the Conservative Party, was a parliamentary secretary, I remember, for the Minister of the Environment, a chair, a well-respected member of Parliament, and a friend. He sought to stand up and speak to something he thought was important to his constituents.

It was the old Conservative Party that shut down that member of Parliament and every other one who tried to get up and speak, because this new Conservative Party talks about wanting people to speak in the House and wanting to have debate.

While it is refreshing to hear it, I do not believe it, and I do not think Canadians are going to believe that suddenly accountability and democracy have broken out within the Prime Minister’s Office. It is the office of this particular Prime Minister who, rather than face any uncomfortable questions from the media or the official opposition members today, or for the rest of this week, has decided that going to South America to sit with other trading partners from other countries we already have established trade deals with to talk about trade deals that already exist is much more important than asking questions about the Senate.

Points of Order

It must be a new Conservative Party that suddenly has on its agenda a legislative directive that the members need to sit longer hours and work hard on something that might be quite topical today, something such as the reform of Canada's Senate, which has been long overdue and long called for by Canadians and New Democrats who said that the place was fundamentally broken. There is no accountability. Unelected and under investigation is the new Senate.

I remember the old Reform Party. You probably do as well, Mr. Speaker. It came in riding from the west, from my part of the world.

I see a member across the way, who was one of the founding members of the Reform Party, calling it a beautiful thing. While I disagreed fundamentally with many of its positions, certainly its social positions, there was something on which I could see some common ground. That was to make Parliament more accountable and to reform the Senate.

The current government has now been in power almost seven long years. Is that right? The time goes slowly. In those six or seven years, the Prime Minister made a promise as one of his fundamental commitments to Canadians. Commitments should be treated sacredly, I believe.

We all get up at elections. We have party platforms and promises we make to Canadians. If we win, that platform and those promises become our agenda. That is what we would seek to do in office. It is simple. One of his promises, one of his agendas, one of his reforms was on the Senate. When the Conservatives were in opposition, they would see those Liberal senators down there taking their money, not really representing anybody, going on trips and maybe even defrauding taxpayers. Who knows? The Reform movement came in and said it was wrong and anti-democratic.

For a party that decided to put "democratic" right in the middle of our name, we take these questions seriously. We feel that it is accountability to the people we on the orange team represent. In a sense, we are watching this Prime Minister now play victim to what is going on in the Senate with senators he appointed exclusively and explicitly to raise money for the Conservative Party of Canada. Now this same Prime Minister claims victimhood and wonders how this happened. How did his chief of staff, who sits to his immediate left every day and knows his deepest, darkest secrets, whom he put in charge of major trade files and negotiations with other countries, cut a \$90,000 cheque to a senator he appointed? However, obviously, the Prime Minister's hands are clean, and he has nothing to say about this. He believes that his hands are so clean that he is not going to answer any questions about it. He is going to go to South America to be in trade talks with countries we already have trade deals with. That is the new Conservative Party, which is the old one, the same one that has forgotten its roots.

Dear Mr. Manning is still with us, so he is not spinning in his grave, but he is definitely spinning. He was asked recently whether the Conservatives have lost their principles. He said, no, they have maintained their priorities. It is an interesting dodge of a question. Mr. Speaker, you have been around politics a bit. You know when a question is put directly and someone answers it indirectly.

● (1305)

[*Translation*]

I find it incredible that we have before us a motion that continues to abuse Parliament. This motion is designed simply to restrict debate and demonstrate to members of the House of Commons that the only reason Parliament exists is so that the government can do what it wants.

I remember a comment made by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. When we were debating a time allocation motion, he said that their intention was not to put an end to debate or to censure it, but just to control Parliament.

It is incredible that a minister is admitting that the Conservatives just want to control the Parliament of Canada. It also reflects the Conservatives' esprit de corps. They want to control everything, not just the opposition and Parliament, but their members, as well as the media and the public.

The current vision of the Prime Minister and the government leaves the public with no choice and no voice. It is all about the kind of country that the Prime Minister wants to build.

[*English*]

We see a government moving this extraordinary thing, which will see, big deal, members of Parliament sitting until midnight.

New Democrats have been known, sometimes to our detriment, to be willing to force the calendar to the very last minute and sit all night, such as when the government moved anti-worker legislation against a very profitable Canada Post, which, I might add, in a parenthetical way, then lost money.

After the lockout by Canada Post, the government imposed wage contracts on those workers that were less than what the company was willing to offer. Then it said that it needed to shut down Canada Post offices around the country, as Canada Post was losing money because of the lockout it allowed them to do. The logic is inherently twisted on that side.

Remember the omnibus debates and the voting we had. I remember my friend from the Green Party moving a certain number of amendments to the bill, which forced the House to sit all night and vote, hour after hour. I remember some of my friends from Surrey who stayed in their seats for 22 hours.

No one has ever accused New Democrats of not being willing to come to work and work on behalf of our constituents. We may do some things wrong. We may sometimes fall short in some areas, but hard work has not ever been one of those things.

There is such irony in hearing a Conservative House leader who, with his Prime Minister, has prorogued Parliament, shut it down, and killed their government's own legislation time and time again, say to the Speaker that the problem is that they cannot get their legislation through.

It had been there for 12 months. After eight months, they killed it themselves and prorogued the House.

Points of Order

One prorogation was quite notable. The government looked to be in a bit of trouble. It was in a minority position. The world was entering into a very deep recession. The Minister of Finance, who claims to be the best in the world, ignored the recession and introduced what the Conservatives called an austerity budget at the very moment when the rest of the world, realizing that the economy was coming to a virtual standstill, was introducing budgets that did the opposite.

The finance genius we have sitting in the chair said, "Never mind what the rest of the world thinks about what is going on in the global economy; we know that Canada is not going into recession", even as we were in the midst of a recession. He introduced an austerity budget to cut back billions in job creation, in grants and in all the things the Conservatives take credit for, such as unemployment insurance for a bunch of Canadians who were just being thrown out of work.

The opposition said that it was not a very good budget and suggested that we vote against that budget. The government panicked and prorogued. Canadians got a civil lesson in how Parliament works. They had never heard the word "prorogation" before. Then we got to learn.

The Prime Minister had to go to the Governor General. He sat there for a number of hours, perhaps being lectured about how undemocratic it was, when facing a non-confidence vote, to head down the road to the Queen's representative to ask for permission to shut it all down before he was thrown out of office. He was more worried about his job that day than about Canadians. That is for sure.

• (1310)

That is a government that killed its legislation in order to save itself, and did it time and time again.

Here is the trend that we worry about with today's motion. For a government that has broken the record by shutting down debate more times than any government in Canadian history, it has refused 99.3% of all the amendments that the opposition has brought to its legislation.

Let us look at that for a moment. The way a bill is supposed to work is it comes into the House and gets debated. There is a pro and con and the real coming together or clash of ideas to improve the legislation because no one is perfect. The drafters of legislation do not get it right. They are sometimes hundreds of pages long and very complicated. The House is meant to debate that. Then we send it to committee and hear from experts, not just members of Parliament who are not often experts in these areas, but people who work in the field. They are the social workers, the financial experts, the crime experts and the police. We hear those suggestions and write amendments based on those ideas. That is the way this place is supposed to work.

However, the government is saying that in 99.3% of those cases those experts are wrong and the government is right. It will not change a period, a comma, not a word in any of the legislation. Then lo and behold, time and time again, the legislation is challenged in the courts successfully. The legislation does not fix the problems identified and costs Canada and Canadians billions.

We all remember well Bill C-30, the Internet snooping bill that would allow the state to look in on the Internet searches and emails of Canadians without any warrant. The government decided in its vigour for its tough on crime agenda that it would pass a law that said that at any point, at any time, Canadians anywhere could have their BlackBerrys and iPhones tapped by the government, that web searches on home computers could be looked at by the government and the police. There is no country in the world, outside of Iran and North Korea, that would even consider doing this. The Conservative government thought it was a fantastic idea. In trying to argue the case, it said that if we were not into exposing our Internet searches and our emails then we must be in support of child pornography.

Has any more offensive or stupid an argument ever been made on the floor of the House of Commons? It is offensive to basic civil liberties and decency, to the role of members of Parliament trying to do our jobs and to the Canadians who said that they were not sure they wanted the government looking at their email?

I look at the member for Yukon right now. I do not know what he is searching and I do not want to know. It is his privacy to look on his computer and do as he sees fit. That is a civil liberty I am sure he defends as well, but not his government.

Bill C-10, the omnibus crime bill, was the flagship. The government rammed it all into one bill and said that it was such important legislation it would shut down debate on it too. Then whole sections of the bill were taken out. Why? It was because they were unconstitutional.

Now we know where that all comes from. Canadians actually pay for a service. Many members of Parliament may not know this, but when a government introduces a bill it goes to constitutional legal experts to determine if the new legislation goes against our constitution, our foundation as a country? If it does, it is a good idea to modify the law to ensure it does not get challenged in the courts, which costs upwards of \$3 million to \$5 million to taxpayers every time there is one of those challenges. The government did not check on Bill C-10. We know that because the people who work for the Government of Canada, who do this work, are no longer receiving references from the government.

The government is not even asking anymore. It is choosing ignorance. This is incredible. It is saying that it does not want to know whether the laws it writes are constitutional, whether the laws it writes as a government are for or against the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. This is incredible. This is not a mistake. It is by intention. Therefore, we have these lawyers sitting in their offices, being paid every day, waiting for the government to refer the bills it introduces here to ensure they can survive a constitutional challenge. The government does not ask anymore.

Points of Order

Bill C-38, the first omnibus bill and Bill C-45, the second omnibus bill, were both challenged in the courts as unconstitutional. First nations are challenging it. I need to address this because the government House leader mentioned two bills that are being moved, so-called, on behalf of first nations. They are Bill S-2 and Bill S-8. One is matrimonial property rights. It sounds pretty innocuous. Most Canadians would say that matrimonial property rights for first nations women on reserve maybe protects their rights. Who is opposed to it? It is not just us in the opposition, but aboriginal women, every first nation women's group in the country. My friend across the way shakes his head, but I can show him the testimony that says the bill is no good for aboriginal women.

● (1315)

However, the Conservatives know better. With their shameful record on aboriginal rights and title in the country, suddenly they know better than aboriginal women, than first nations women. Bill S-8 is a bill to help first nations have clean drinking water because the record has been shameful.

Government after government has failed first nations communities. Thirty-five per cent of the people I represent in northern British Columbia are in first nations communities. The water conditions there are incredibly bad. We have to do something about it. There are fixes and there are ideas coming from those communities.

Instead the government moves the bill, handing all responsibility down to first nations in terms of cleaning up their own water mess, but none of the resources to do it. Are first nations supportive of it? No. Nor would any municipality or any province in Canada be supportive of legislation that rams down responsibility without any of the support, money or help to get that done.

Most of these first nations communities are living in abject poverty. Where does the government think they are going to get the money from? The government will not settle treaty with them in the west. First nations are having mining, oil and gas exploration and pipelines put everywhere and are receiving none of the royalties, none of the compensation and the government will not move treaty forward.

I was just in Gitksan territory, speaking with the Gitksan and the Wet'suwet'en, talking about basic child services, kids who are being abused in their homes and setting up a program that the federal government said that we should enact 20 years ago to allow first nations more rights and responsibilities to rescue those kids and help them kids integrate back into their communities.

Who is not coming to the table? The Conservative government. This is the government that on Bill S-2 and Bill S-8 suddenly said that it had first nations rights and title and priorities at heart, when it did not.

The place can work. Members can sense a certain amount of frustration in my voice, because Parliament can work. It is actually designed to work. I love our system. It is so superior to many other systems I have studied around the world, that have consistent congressional gridlock on legislation and on budgets. We can make things happen here.

However, with the power that is afforded a majority government, which is a lot, comes a certain amount of responsibility to use the power wisely and not abuse it. Yet time and again we have seen the government House leader and other ministers get up and say that they are not looking to limit the debate; they just want to control it. They reject virtually 100% of all the amendments and all the changes and suggestions they hear at committee because they know better and they have the votes to push it forward.

It is at such a point that the control has extended deeply into the government's caucus. Some of the more socially conservative members of the Conservative caucus are no longer free to speak, or are only free to speak on certain things, in certain ways, if the Prime Minister's Office allows for it.

In a small program that we run in northern B.C., initiated a number of years ago, I hold a conference call with all the detachment commanders from all the RCMP outposts that exist in my riding. It is a very large riding facing a lot of tough, difficult situations with policing. Once every two or three months I get on the phone with 12 detachment commanders and we talk about what is going on. We talk about what is happening in crime, what the drug use is like, what legislation is moving through the House that will help or hinder these hard-working, hard-serving officers.

I am not allowed to have that conversation with these RCMP officers anymore. I am not supposed to talk to them. As a sitting member of Parliament, I am not supposed to go to them. A number of them have come to me because they are friends and we have known each other for years. They offer good, on-the-ground advice about what is happening.

They say that they are sorry, that they cannot talk to me. They tell me that I have to phone the Prime Minister's Office in order for them to talk to me about what is going on in Prince Rupert, or what is going on in Dease Lake or Bella Coola.

It is insane. This is wrong. Government officials at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, who I have known for years and who I phone just for an update to see what is going on with our fish on the west coast, tell me that I am a member of Parliament from the opposition and that I need to phone the people in the Prime Minister's Office and that they will give me permission as to whether they can tell me what is going on in Canada's fishery.

This is not their government. This is not a Conservative government. This is Canada's government. We pay for these civil servants. We pay their salaries to do work on behalf of Canadians. Whether it is silencing scientists, shutting down access for members of Parliament to basic conversations, or shutting down debate in Parliament, the consistent voice from the government is that it will not be held to account.

● (1320)

[*Translation*]

This is bad. This is not just about the privilege all members of the House need to do their job. The government says there is some urgency, but there is not. There is no urgency when it comes to the government's mandate or agenda.

Points of Order

It is very strange for the government to say it is very open, when we see what is going on in the Senate.

We have senators like Duffy, Wallin and Brazeau. All current senators have potentially stolen money from Canadians. These are the same senators that the Prime Minister says are very good people. These are the same senators using money from the Canadian people to travel during an election and raise money for the Conservative Party. That is the new Conservative Party. I do not understand.

I remember the Reform Party of Canada and some reforms that Mr. Manning wanted to make. With the current party, it is the same story as with the Liberal Party and the Gomery commission and all the rest. I am both angry and sad.

The majority of Canadians did not vote for this government, which has a majority, but does not have the majority support of Canadians. Close to 60% of Canadians voted against this agenda, against this sort of arrogance. They voted not to have the kind of government that now uses brutal tactics, not against the New Democratic Party, but against Parliament.

Lastly, I think we need to have a referendum, which may not happen until the next election.

[English]

It bears some comment, not only with respect to the Senate scandal but even the motion today.

I watched the government House leader and the Prime Minister on television earlier. He actually allowed the media into his caucus room for a second, which was bizarre. The bully turns into the victim, that somehow this is put upon them, that they are somehow being victimized here.

What frustrates me is not just the work that we have to do as parliamentarians that is constantly thwarted by the government at committee stage, and my friend laughs, but how can it be possible that 99.3% of all amendments were rejected? The evidence is clear.

My friend can shake his head and laugh and treat this with disdain or heckle out what seems to be a favourite tactic of some of my friends who cannot win the debate, but can simply sit in their seats and heckle, yell and try to put down a comment that hurts a little too much, that being that 99.3% of all amendments were rejected, that the witnesses were all wrong, that the government was always right and that the courts must be wrong too. Soon the Conservatives will call them activist courts like the Republicans do in the states. Members should watch for it because it is coming.

We believe this motion is fundamentally flawed in its abuse of this place and of all members. I do not speak just for the New Democrats or the folks down the way. I speak for the backbenchers who have been rubbing up against some of the limitations. What is sad about most of it and is most concerning is those who are not agitating against the Conservative government's control over its backbench and accepting it. I lament the most for those who are so comfortable reading the script from the Prime Minister's Office and repeating it like robots, feeling that is their work and whose expectations of what it is to be a member of Parliament are so diminished that they simply accept it, not those the media have called rebels who have stood up and stated that they want to have their own statement but the Prime

Minister's Office has shut them down. They run under the blue banner, which is their choice.

I lament for those who seem so happy to get up and repeat the mindless dribble that is put to them by the Prime Minister's Office day after day. When they first ran for office, I wonder if they said that they wanted to be a member of Parliament to represent people and get to Parliament to speak with a strong voice of conviction on behalf of the people they represent and that in order to do they would read whatever was put in front of them by the Prime Minister's Office, written by a 24-year-old intern who types out some sort of nonsense and makes up policies that the NDP does not have, making personal attacks on a regular basis as a substitute for honest and sincere debate? Was that really their expectation?

I wish I had some video evidence from some of those early debates because I know that is not what those members ran on. I know their nomination meetings did not look like that, nor did any of the debates they attended during the campaign. That is not what they said. They said that they would speak on behalf of their constituents, fight for them and still raise their voice, even if that meant it was contrary to what their government suggested.

• (1325)

I am sure that is what my friends across the way said. They are very nice people. I know a lot of these folks, as we have spent some time together. I know some of their inner thoughts about the way Parliament ought to be, and some of them lament it. However, it is the ones who do not who worry me. They are the ones who so comfortably slip into that straitjacket day after day. Maybe they just get used to it, but they are able to rationalize that there is some larger agenda that is more important than their having an independent and free voice.

They can keep yelling and you can allow them to if you wish, Mr. Speaker, but the truth often hurts, and the truth of the matter is that with a majority government, this member and his colleagues have chosen to vote for closure more than any government in Canadian history. With a majority, the Conservative government has refused the evidence, has refused the science time and time again, and that government is bad government.

The Conservative government appointed senators, and I am sure some fundraising went on for some of my friends. Maybe Ms. Wallin, Mr. Duffy or Mr. Brazeau came by and raised a few dollars, shook a few hands and got a few votes for my friends. Maybe there is a little bit of a tarnish on my colleagues, which is why they are calling out and why they are worried. It is because their base hates this. They hate the idea of entitlement and of an insider's game that goes on in Ottawa all the time, and that friends of the Prime Minister's Office get some sort of special treatment.

Talking about special treatment, how about a \$90,000 personal cheque just cut off the back and handed over to somebody who may have defrauded taxpayers? Where is the Reform Party now? Where are the original Conservative intentions now? They are gone, bit by bit, eroded piece by piece. That is where it has gone, and it has all been subjugated to some idea that there is a better and bigger cause, that this grand scheme they are involved in somehow makes all of it justifiable.

Points of Order

Can you imagine, Mr. Speaker, what these guys would sound like if the roles were reversed? If it were a Liberal government with senators getting cheques from the Prime Minister's chief of staff or a New Democratic government acting the way the Conservatives act, could you imagine the hue and cry and the calls for resignations every second minute? They would be losing their minds.

Now the Conservatives play the victim, saying that these senators were put upon them, that they didn't know what they were doing, that it is terrible. They only have a majority, both here and there. The Prime Minister has appointed more senators than any Prime Minister in Canadian history. How many did he say he would appoint? None, but he had to appoint some, and then it had to be justified. These are small and slow slippages, and this motion is a continuation of that.

This motion says that Parliament matters less and that those Canadians who have grown cynical about the role of MPs are justified in their cynicism. We say that is wrong. How do we turn to the young voters coming up? How do we turn to people who come to us and say that they might want to run for office one day? How can we say that their voices will matter when the government moves motions like this time and time again, shutting down debate?

As my friend the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development said, the Conservatives do not want to shut down debate; they just want to control it. Is this is how one entices people into a life of politics? Is this how one encourages young people to vote? Do we say, "Welcome to Parliament, where we are going to control debate and shut it down time and time again"? This is the Conservatives' call to action.

It is not a call to action, but a call to inaction. It is a call to cynicism. It is calling to people, "Do not look over here; nothing is happening here in government. Go on with your lives and other things that are more important and distracting." The government is counting on people to have an attention deficit rather than realize that the decisions we make here in Parliament every day affect Canadians in every way.

If members of Parliament cannot do their work, as this motion suggests, and hold the government to account, it is bad government. It is bad government when it cannot find \$3 billion that may be under a mattress or in a banana stand or wherever it happens to be, and when senators rip off taxpayers with no consequence whatsoever. We think the RCMP might have a role to play here.

What would happen if any of the Canadians in our gallery today or watching on TV defrauded the Canadian government of \$500? They would get charged. However, if it is a Conservative senator, what happens? Oh, they just recuse themselves from caucus. Wow. They still get paid, they still have all of their privileges, but they cannot go to caucus meetings on Wednesday mornings.

Mr. Speaker, do you think that maybe that punishment is a little severe? I mean, having to recuse oneself from a two-hour meeting on Wednesday morning for defrauding taxpayers—boy, that seems pretty harsh.

Why the double standard? We used to call that the culture of entitlement. I remember a colleague of mine in this place, Ed Broadbent, asking a former Liberal minister who became head of the mint and was claiming packets of gum and coffee on his receipts,

"Are you entitled to your entitlements, sir?" This person took a moment of authenticity and said, "Yes, I am entitled to my entitlements."

● (1330)

The Conservatives railed at the Liberal entitlement, the culture of entitlement, the Gomery inquiry and all those terrible things that went down.

History repeats itself if one is not a student of history, and it seems that the Conservative Party has not looked at the history of this place or of other parliaments.

The fact of the matter is that debate in and of itself is not a bad thing. The exchange of ideas is not in and of itself a bad thing. Being wrong from time to time is not of itself a bad thing; learning happens in those moments, and the government needs to learn, because I can read off the list of the bills it had so fundamentally wrong that it had to withdraw them. The Conservatives had to say that they got it so badly wrong because they listened to none of the amendments that they have to fix it now, at the very last minute, or wait until it gets to the Senate and let the unaccountable, unelected and under investigation senators deal with it. That is no form of democracy worth defending, and the Conservatives know it. They know it better than most.

I will move that the motion be amended by deleting all the words after "Fridays" and replacing them with the following: "(b) when oral questions are to be taken up pursuant"—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, my friends have not heard the motion. Maybe they do not understand it yet. How could they? They have not heard it yet.

Allow me to finish—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. opposition House leader is moving an amendment. He does not need unanimous consent to move an amendment at this point.

There will be an opportunity for members to express their opinion on the amendment, but let us allow the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley to move the amendment before we do so.

The hon. member.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, perhaps I will preface it a bit to contain the catcalls.

The government is eventually going to shut the House down early, as many suspect, due to the context and the scandals going on right now. We are going to move an amendment that would allow question period to be one and a half hour, 90 minutes, to allow the government to be held to account.

It is a simple amendment. I will read it, and then we can debate it. I know the Prime Minister has seen an urgency to suddenly go to South America, but we believe that a 90-minute question period would be a good idea.

I move:

Speaker's Ruling

That the motion be amended by deleting all of the words after "Fridays;" and replacing them with the following:

(b) when oral questions are to be taken up pursuant to Standing Order 30(5), they shall last for a period of 90 minutes.

* * *

● (1335)

POINTS OF ORDER

SCOPE OF PRIVATE MEMBERS' BILLS—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: Before moving on to questions and comments, I am now prepared to rule on the point of order raised on April 25 by the hon. member for Toronto Centre regarding the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, recommending that the scope of Bill C-425, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act (honouring the Canadian Armed Forces), be expanded.

[Translation]

I would like to thank the hon. member for Toronto Centre for having raised this issue, and the hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, the hon. House Leader of the Official Opposition, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, and the members for Winnipeg North, Saint-Lambert and Calgary Northeast for their interventions.

[English]

In raising this matter, the hon. member for Toronto Centre explained that during its consideration of Bill C-425, the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration adopted a motion recommending that the House grant the committee the power to expand the scope of the bill in order to allow for the consideration of what he called "amendments that the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism has asked be added to the list".

This led to the presentation on April 23, 2013, of the committee's eighth report. He found this approach to be problematic in two respects. First, he argued that pursuant to Standing Order 97.1, committees examining private members' bills are restricted as to the types of reports they can present to the House. He argued essentially that since the eighth report falls outside these parameters, it is out of order.

His second argument centred on the impact such a manner of proceeding could have. Specifically, he expressed concern that if committees examining private members' bills were to be allowed latitude to proceed in this fashion, the effect of this practice "will be that the government could, by extrapolation, even add an omnibus feature to a private member's bill and say it is using its majority to add everything, the whole kitchen sink, into the measure."

[Translation]

The Government House Leader explained that, in view of the differences of opinion expressed in the committee as to whether the amendments proposed were within the scope of the bill, the committee was seeking guidance from the House on the matter. In making this observation, he pointed out that this process would result in a number of hours of debate in the House on the committee report before a decision was taken.

[English]

In his presentation the Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons argued that Standing Order 97.1 does not preclude a committee from seeking an instruction from the House in relation to a private member's bill. He further explained that the committee remains seized of Bill C-425 and that its eighth report in no way supersedes the 60-sitting-day deadline to report the bill back to the House.

At the outset the Chair wishes to clarify what appear to be certain misconceptions about the nature of private members' bills.

The first of these has to do with the arguments made by the House leader for the official opposition and the member for Saint-Lambert in reference to the constitutional compliance of legislation sponsored by private members.

As pointed out by the member for Saint-Lambert, constitutional compliance is among the criteria used by the Subcommittee on Private Members' Business to determine non-votability of private members' bills. *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition, describes these criteria at page 1130, including one requirement that "bills and motions must not clearly violate the *Constitution Acts, 1867 to 1982*, including the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms*".

The Chair is not aware of further constitutional compliance tests that are applied to any kind of legislation, whether sponsored by the government or by private members, once bills are before the House or its committees. In addition, hon. members will recall that in a recent ruling delivered on March 27, I reminded the House that as Speaker I have no role in interpreting matters of a constitutional or legal nature.

● (1340)

[Translation]

Another apparent source of confusion has to do with the difference between private bills and public bills. Virtually all the bills that come before the House are public bills, whether they are sponsored by private members or by the government.

[English]

As O'Brien and Bosc explains at page 1178:

Private bills must not be confused with private Members' bills. Although private bills are sponsored by private Members, the term "private Member's bill" refers only to public bills dealing with a matter of public policy introduced by Members who are not Ministers.

[Translation]

Thus both government and private members' bills are subject to the same basic legislative process, namely introduction and first reading, second reading, committee stage, report stage and, finally, third reading. At the same time, the House has seen fit to devise specific procedures for dealing with public bills sponsored by the government and private members alike.

Speaker's Ruling

[English]

For example, Standing Order 73 allows the government to propose that a government bill be referred to committee before second reading after a five-hour debate. The purpose of this rule is to allow greater flexibility to members in committee by enabling them to propose amendments to alter the scope of the measure.

[Translation]

The procedures in place for dealing with private members' bills are likewise many layered, and have evolved in response to particular situations faced by the House in the past. This is the case with the provision for a maximum of two hours of debate at second reading, which came about to allow the House to consider more items and thus to allow more private members to have their measures considered. Similarly, Standing Order 97.1 was originally brought in to ensure that private members' bills referred to committee would be returned to the House and to the order of precedence in a timely fashion.

[English]

In the present case, it appears to the Chair that the essence of the procedural question before me is to determine whether the House has the power to grant permission to a committee to expand the scope of a private member's bill after that scope has been agreed to by the House at second reading and, if so, whether this can be achieved by way of a committee report.

House of Commons Procedure and Practice, second edition, is helpful in this regard. It states at page 752:

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

Clearly then, by way of a motion of instruction, the House can grant a committee the power to expand the scope of a bill, be it a government bill or a private member's bill. An example can be found at page 289 of the Journals for April 27, 2010, where an opposition member moved a motion of instruction related to a government bill.

[Translation]

Having established that the House does have the authority to grant permission to a committee to expand the scope of a bill through a motion of instruction, the question becomes whether a committee report is also a procedurally valid way to achieve the same result.

[English]

The member for Toronto Centre is correct in saying that the explicit authority to present this type of report is not found in Standing Order No. 97.1, which exists to oblige committees to respect deadlines for reporting back to the House on private members' bills. In that respect, Standing Order No. 97.1 continues to apply.

However, Standing Order No. 108(1)(a) does grant committees this power under their more general mandate to:

examine and enquire into all such matters as may be referred to them by the House [and] to report from time to time

In describing the three broad categories of reports that standing committees normally present, O'Brien and Bosc, at page 985, describe administrative and procedural reports as those:

in which standing committees ask the House for special permission or additional powers, or those that deal with a matter of privilege or procedure arising from committee proceedings.

● (1345)

[Translation]

An example of a committee reporting on a matter related to a bill may be found in the *Journals* of April 29, 2008, where, in its sixth report, the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development felt compelled to provide reasons why it did not complete the study of a particular private member's bill.

[English]

Finally, O'Brien and Bosc, at page 752, further state:

A committee that so wishes may also seek an instruction from the House.

This undoubtedly could be done only through the presentation of a committee report to the House.

What this confirms is that the authority of the House to grant permission to a committee to expand the scope of a bill can be sought and secured, either through a motion of instruction or through concurrence in a committee report.

O'Brien and Bosc summarizes this well at page 992:

[Translation]

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

[English]

Later, O'Brien and Bosc explain, at page 1075:

Recommendations in committee reports are normally drafted in the form of motions so that, if the reports are concurred in, the recommendations become clear orders or resolutions of the House.

[Translation]

Just as the adoption of a motion of instruction to a committee would become an order of the House, so too would the adoption of a committee report requesting the permission of the House to expand the scope of a bill.

Of course, it has always been the case that instructions to a committee must be in proper form. According to O'Brien and Bosc, at page 754, such instructions must be "worded in such a way that the committee will clearly understand what the House wants".

[English]

It is nevertheless clear to the Chair that there is genuine disquiet about the impact of this attempted procedural course of action. The Chair is not deaf to those concerns and, in that light, wishes to reassure the House that this manner of proceedings does not obviate the need for committees to observe all the usual rules governing the admissibility of amendments to the clauses of a bill, which are described in detail at pages 766 to 761 of *House of Commons Procedure and Practice*, second edition.

Government Orders

In particular, granting a committee permission to expand the scope of a bill does not, ipso facto, grant it permission to adopt amendments that run counter to its principle. Were a committee to report a bill to the House containing inadmissible amendments, O'Brien and Bosc at page 775 states:

The admissibility of those amendments, and of any other amendments made by a committee, may therefore be challenged on procedural grounds when the House resumes its consideration of the bill at report stage. The admissibility of the amendments is then determined by the Speaker of the House, whether in response to a point of order or on his or her own initiative.

For all of the reasons outlined, I must conclude that the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration is in order. I thank all hon. members for their attention.

* * *

EXTENSION OF SITTING HOURS

The House resumed consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it has been an interesting process we have witnessed over the last couple of years. We have gone from having a minority Conservative government to a totally different attitude on how to govern proceedings inside the House now that the Conservatives have a majority. Democracy has really fallen to the side. It is not as important as it used to be when the Conservative/Reformers had a minority government.

I want to raise a specific issue. It was during the 39th Parliament that the previous clerk of the House of Commons told the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs that the budget for Parliament can handle two weeks of extended sitting hours in June. However, if the extended hours were to continue for additional weeks, the government would likely have to seek Parliament's approval for more money.

I notice that the supplementary estimates (A) do not include a request to make any of the payments that will be generated by things such as overtime for House of Commons staff. I would argue that the government House leader seems to be responding to a Conservative crisis from last week and is getting anxious to leave a little early as opposed to going through the normal process. If the government had a plan to sit extra hours, there should have been a budget request going into the estimates to increase the budget, which would allow us to sit the extra weeks.

My question to the opposition House leader is whether he would concur that this might have been done in a very hasty fashion, possibly as a way to deal with the crisis that is looming with respect to the Senate.

• (1350)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it seems to the Conservatives that something so unimportant as taxpayer dollars would never get in the way of their avoiding a crisis. The fact that they have not actually accounted for the money required to run Parliament for these extra hours for an extended time—a month, in this case—shows two things. One is that they do not really care all that much if they have to blow more money. I remind my hon. colleague of the scandal around the F-35 purchase. It does not really matter what kind of evidence comes

forward or how expensive it is, whether the evidence is from the Parliamentary Budget Officer, the U.S. Congress or the Auditor General of Canada. The political expediency of buying those particular jets, which they seem obsessed with, always overrides the responsibility they have to taxpayers.

With respect to this new bullying tactic and ramming bills through Parliament and the fact that it is going to cost more money to do what the Conservatives say they are going to do, I am going to take the House leader at his word today. When he was asked by my friend from Gatineau if we were sitting all the way to the end of June, as the calendar now states, at these extended hours, he said yes, because they are such hard-working Conservatives.

They do not have the money to pay for it. We will find out where they claw it back from. I have an idea. There is \$90 million being spent on the Senate, where we do not really get good value for money. Why do we not cut that budget down a few hundred million dollars over the years and pay for some things Canadians want?

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am curious about the procedural and traditional question he raised on extended hours until the very end of the current sitting, with no justification. Another place we could find the money would be the completely unaccountable budget of the Prime Minister's office, currently at \$10 million. We cannot even get a list of who works there or what they earn. Perhaps we could attach that as a condition precedent to meeting until midnight. I also do not mind late hours, but I would like to see taxpayers get the accountability they deserve.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, this is an interesting and maybe fruitful exercise. We could start to look at the way the Conservative government spends its money, which is badly, on gazebos and F-35s. There is \$3 billion it cannot actually account for, which I believe was meant for anti-terrorism measures, and \$100-plus million for ads Canadians are annoyed by. Those all seem like good places to start to look for the money we need to allow Parliament to function. I think Canadians could actually get behind the idea of allowing democracy to go ahead of all of these wasteful, ridiculous expenditures of the Conservatives, who were supposed to be conservative with taxpayer dollars and have turned out to be anything but. Those would all be great sources.

I would like to suggest to my friend down the way that the Senate would be the New Democrats' preferred place to start. Not only are we losing money in the proposition and getting nothing for it, we are probably being defrauded right now. I do not want to pay for Conservative senators to run around raising money for Conservative MPs and the party itself. That is one of the worst uses of taxpayer money I have ever seen.

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague pointed out, actually, a really interesting aspect. When one is in trouble, what does one do? One runs for the border and goes south, just like the Prime Minister has done.

Government Orders

I want to go to a specific element he pointed out that is important, which is that legislation that is tied up in the budget bill does not go to committee. We are dealing with the Investment Canada Act. This is the third time it has been in a budget bill, because it has been done wrong every single time. There is legislation related to CIDA. There is all kinds of legislation in this budget bill. It not only locks out the committee process, it locks out the public, businesses, not-for-profit organizations, researchers and the experts. All those that have provided value-added input are now disappearing. That is why we are losing in the courts.

I would like my hon. colleague to expand on that.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my friend from Windsor West not only for his question but for the work he has done with respect to the border. Every time the current government increases the hardship for the border guards who work at all the border crossings, but particularly at Windsor, he has recognized not only the harm and the risk to our border agents but the harm to our Canadian economy when we do not have the free flow and exchange of goods, particularly with our largest trading partner.

With respect to how legislation comes through now, it has become a fundamental and categorical mess. Not only is there the expense to Canadians from all these charter challenges that go to the Supreme Court, while the government uses Canadians' money to defend bad legislation it knows is wrong, it also hurts the business community, which is looking for certainty of the rules, whether it is the foreign investment act, et cetera. It would be incredible if one of these ministers would get up one day and actually define "net benefit" when talking about the acquisition of Canadian companies from, in some cases, Chinese state-owned enterprises. It hurts the business community and it hurts our economy when the government keeps writing such bad laws and keeps getting it wrong, simply out of hubris and arrogance.

Let us do it right. Let us use Parliament for what it is for, which is to conduct debate, hold these guys to account, and make sure that they stop blowing so many billions of dollars on such wasteful and dumb ideas.

• (1355)

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there was some talk of overtime from the other side of the House. I think the idea of having question period for an extra 45 minutes may be a bit of overtime for ministers on the other side. However, is it possible that with an extra 45 minutes, we might actually get some answers at question period?

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, that is a novel concept. The opposition would put forward the questions we put each and every day and then the government would seek to actually answer those questions.

How many constituents have we all heard from who have said, "I watched question period the other day. You know what frustrates me the most? You guys ask a simple, direct question, such as, 'When is the government going to do X?' or 'When is decision Y?'" and all you get back is this baffle-gab time and again." Maybe an extra 45 minutes a day would do the trick.

What we will see in question period today is that each of the ministers has a little binder. They flip open these little cheat sheets to

answer questions they do not know the answers to. Perhaps after another 45 minutes, they would run out of those little cheat sheets, and then, lo and behold, they might actually answer a question. They might actually give us their thoughts on the affairs of the state and tell Canadians, for once, what is actually going on. Rather than finding out about it from access to information and through scandal-plagued Senate debacles, we could find out what the government is actually planning to do with the money it spends on behalf of Canadians.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when we hear that we have this legislative agenda and we are going to sit until midnight every night until June 21, this is really legislation through exhaustion.

We have so much stuff being done by the current government outside of Parliament. We watched as major changes to family reunification were announced on Friday, the Friday before the break week, that would basically put families under stress, yet here we are now saying that we will be meeting until midnight. If we have so much stuff to debate, why does the government keep shutting down debate constantly?

I have to say to my esteemed colleague that if we were to have a longer question period, my fear is that the government would keep reading the same answers over and over again.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, hope springs eternal to my friend from Surrey.

One wonders if we actually ever saw the legislation that allowed for half of all so-called immigration into Canada to be now under the foreign temporary worker program. I do not recall seeing legislation from the government that said that one out of every three new jobs created since 2008 would go to a foreign temporary worker. I do not remember that bill.

I do not remember the bill before Parliament in which it said that Chinese state-owned enterprises can buy up Canadian enterprises with little to no oversight. I do not remember that legislation. If the government had actually moved some legislation and new law, we would have debated it. The government would not have had the courage of its convictions, and we would actually have seen something that is quite unique under a Conservative government: Parliament doing its job and members of Parliament speaking on behalf of the people they represent and holding these guys to account. Lord knows, they need it.

*Statements by Members***STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS***[English]***ETOBICOKE CENTRE**

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I meet with constituents frequently. Their insights are invaluable, and I am grateful for their confidence and the opportunity to serve Etobicoke Centre these past two years.

This past week, I updated my constituents of Somali heritage on our government's support of Somalia, and I announced new humanitarian funding for the region.

I discussed the super visa with the Serbian community.

I met with the Ukrainian community in my capacity as chair of the Canada-Ukraine Friendship Group.

I toured an adult learning and training centre for developing skills and finding jobs for Canadians.

I attended the Toronto Catholic District School Board's mini-Olympics.

I was interviewed on a Hungarian TV program, *Magyar Képek*.

I participated in the Rotary Club reception for Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal recipients.

I welcomed the International Development and Relief Foundation to Etobicoke Centre.

I presented Florence Thiffault greetings on her 95th birthday at the season opening of the Etobicoke Lawn Bowling Club.

I visited a photo exhibition chronicling the Katyn massacre, and I addressed Polish veterans who valiantly fought for and won the Battle of Monte Cassino in May 1943, a battle my own father fought in.

It was yet another productive week in Etobicoke Centre.

* * *

● (1400)

ELIJAH HARPER

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my constituents and all New Democrats, I stand in this House and pay tribute to Elijah Harper. I would like to share our condolences with Elijah Harper's family and his community on this great loss.

From a young age, I had the honour of knowing Elijah as he was first elected MLA in Manitoba in 1981, along with my father.

Elijah made history as the first first nations person to be elected as MLA and then as cabinet minister in Manitoba. He changed the course of history by speaking for aboriginal people on the Meech Lake accord. He spoke with courage on first nations issues and was a champion for first nations sovereignty, for justice, for building a better future.

I have the honour to represent the same constituency Elijah Harper represented, including Red Sucker Lake, Elijah's first nation, a nation that is so proud of him. I was fortunate to have the

opportunity to meet with Elijah on a number of occasions to share perspectives on northern and aboriginal issues.

Elijah Harper was a visionary and a trailblazer. He was a role model. History will record him as being a great leader for first nations, for Manitobans and for Canadians.

We thank Elijah. *Chii-Miigwetch*.

* * *

MEMORIAL CUP

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it will be an incredible week in Saskatoon as the city and the province of Saskatchewan host the Memorial Cup. The Memorial Cup will be an outstanding event, thanks to the true Saskatchewan volunteer spirit.

Military representatives, alumni from the host Saskatoon Blades and Canadian Hockey League officials were on hand as the Memorial Cup arrived in Saskatoon. The flyover by two members of the Canadian Forces Snowbirds, Canada's famed aerobatics team, made the opening ceremony special. It was an opportunity to acknowledge the role of the Canadian military in our country today. Its members' sacrifices are extraordinary, and the opening ceremony was an opportunity for the people of Saskatoon to express the gratitude they feel to the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces.

Special thanks to the many volunteers who have worked tirelessly to ensure the success of this Memorial Cup, led by Tim Gitzel and Jack Brodsky. They are to be commended for going above and beyond the call of duty. It is the effort they are demonstrating this week that has made Saskatoon the volunteer capital of Canada. We salute each and every unsung volunteer and thank them for making the Memorial Cup an event of which to be proud.

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*[Translation]***HAITIAN COMMUNITY IN THE NATIONAL CAPITAL REGION**

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in recent years, there has been a notable resurgence of pride and energy from the Haitian diaspora in the national capital region.

I would especially like to congratulate His Excellency, Mr. Frantz Liautaud, Haiti's ambassador to Canada, on the occasion of the 210th anniversary of the creation of the Haitian flag. The anniversary celebrations were held on May 15 at the Canadian Museum of Civilization in Gatineau, where hundreds of guests had the pleasure of listening to Chantale Laville's beautiful voice and David Bontemps's piano performance.

Statements by Members

I am taking this opportunity to highlight the creation of excellence scholarships for the Haitian community in the Outaouais. Last year, together with Gatineau city councillor Mireille Apollon and a remarkable committee of volunteers, I launched this initiative at the University of Ottawa, and funds were collected to create an excellence scholarship for the Haitian community at that university. This year, we are holding an event on Thursday, May 23, with all profits going to create a matching scholarship fund at the Université du Québec en Outaouais.

Congratulations and all the best to our friends from the Haitian diaspora and, of course, heartfelt congratulations to all Haitians.

* * *

[English]

CANADIAN FORCES

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Etobicoke—Lakeshore, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I would like to stand and honour the men and women who have served in the Canadian Forces and who continue to serve our great country. Our Conservative government supports our troops while in combat, and we continue to support them when they return home safely.

This is why our government is getting things done for Canadian veterans, cutting red tape, creating new career opportunities and partnering with non-profit organizations and corporate Canada to ensure a seamless transition to civilian life.

In addition to what our government is doing, a Canadian charity, To the Stan and Back, supports post-combat wellness programs for returning troops from Afghanistan, or “the Stan” for short. Tonight, To the Stan and Back is hosting the fourth annual Party Under the Stars in Ottawa to raise money for the Canadian men and women who have returned recently from the Stan. This event is always a great time and raises money for a worthwhile cause.

I would like to invite my fellow parliamentarians to show their support for tonight's great event and support the men and women who have risked their lives for the safety of all Canadians.

* * *

• (1405)

[Translation]

GRANBY REGION

Mr. Réjean Genest (Shefford, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Granby region is a very popular summer destination, and it is easy to see why. Our major tourist attraction is without a doubt the well-known Granby Zoo and its aquatic park Amazoo. Every year, 600,000 visitors come to admire the zoo's 1,000 animals.

Yamaska National Park and its beach are also very popular with visitors who enjoy canoeing, camping and much more. The Granby area is also home to a fantastic bike path network. Granby also hosts a number of events, such as Granby International, one of the largest classic car shows in Canada, the Granby Challenger tennis championship, festivals in downtown Granby, and I could go on.

Campgrounds, hotels and bed and breakfasts offer a wide range of lodging options. This summer, you will need more than a week in Granby.

[English]

NORTH SHORE RESCUE

Mr. Andrew Saxton (North Vancouver, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to salute the incredible work of North Shore Rescue.

Originally established as a civil defence unit in 1965, North Shore Rescue quickly evolved into a specialized, well-trained and highly effective search and rescue team comprising entirely volunteers.

Their focus on mountain, helicopter and urban search and rescue and public education provides life-saving services all year round.

Last year I was pleased to present founding member Karl Winter with a Queen Elizabeth II Diamond Jubilee Medal in recognition of more than 50 years of contributions to this service.

Recently the combined efforts of rescue team leader Tim Jones and our government also helped to speedily resolve a regulatory problem with helicopter long line equipment. This quick action saved lives and is a testament to the importance of teamwork.

On behalf of the outdoor sports enthusiasts who enjoy North Vancouver's gorgeous terrain, I want to thank the North Shore Rescue team for its ongoing commitment to our safety and security, and send big congratulations on its new state-of-the-art command centre.

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CAVE AND BASIN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last Friday it was my pleasure to announce the grand re-opening of Banff's Cave and Basin National Historic Site.

In 1883, Canadian Pacific Railway workers explored the site's warm mineral springs at Sulphur Mountain. They set off a chain of events that echoed eastward across the great plains, all the way to the ears of our country's founding prime minister, Sir John A. Macdonald.

Just two years later, his government reserved a wide swath of territory surrounding the cave and basin. This was the genesis of Canada's national parks system, which today includes 44 national parks and 167 national historic sites.

Since 2006, our Conservative government has expanded the total area of our national parks by more than 50%, an area larger than Greece. These are Canada's gift to future generations and form the very fabric of our great nation.

I invite all Canadians and the world to visit the revitalized Cave and Basin National Historic Site in beautiful Banff National Park to see where this dream truly began.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

SHIPWRECK IN TABUSINTAC

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with sadness that I rise today to pay my respects to the three lobster fishers who died in the early hours of Saturday, May 18. Samuel-René Boutin of Rivière-du-Portage, age 23; Alfred Rousselle of Brantville, age 32; and Ian Benoit of Grattan Road, age 35, left the Tabusintac wharf in New Brunswick, never to return. Their boat hit a sandbar and capsized.

Fishing was Samuel-René, Alfred and Ian's livelihood, but they also loved being at sea. Every morning, hundreds of fishers leave their families and go out to sea. Fishers and their families are all too familiar with the dangers involved, but they go out despite the risks.

On behalf of the NDP, I would like to take this opportunity to offer our sincere condolences to these men's families and to all the fishers who have lost friends and colleagues. Our thoughts are with you.

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[English]

LEADER OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for 17 years, the NDP leader has known about corruption in Quebec, but kept it all to himself.

In 1994, the NDP leader met with the former mayor of Laval, who offered him help in the form of an envelope stuffed with cash.

Today, media are reporting that after the former mayor of Laval tried to bribe the NDP leader, the NDP leader had the gall to thank him and shake his hand. That does not sound like someone outraged by being witness to criminal activity.

Let us recap what we know. The NDP leader was silent about the criminal activity of the former mayor of Laval for 17 years. Then he was untruthful about it when he said he was never offered any money. Then he did not seem that upset about it.

The NDP leader has some explaining to do.

* * *

● (1410)

[Translation]

PEACE AND FRIENDSHIP AWARENESS

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, the Peace and Friendship Awareness Walk arrived in Ottawa.

[English]

Adam Barnaby, Christianne Bernard, Tina Caplin, Doris Martin, Richard Martin and Ryan Papineau all walked from Listuguj First Nation in the Gaspé all the way to Ottawa, starting 21 days ago, meeting many first nations along the way. They are calling for the respect of treaty rights and better environmental protection.

Their initiative is just the latest example of the leadership the Mi'kmaq Nations have taken in the Gaspé and across Atlantic

Canada. From employment insurance to the Navigable Waters Protection Act, from wind energy production to salmon river protection, the Mi'kmaq are leaders in the many issues that impact Eastern Canada.

[Translation]

Their leadership is a perfect example of the benefits of working together.

I thank all of the walkers for reaching out to us. Now it is up to us to reciprocate.

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LEADER OF THE NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP has been aware of the political corruption in Quebec since 1994, when the mayor of Laval allegedly offered him an envelope—the Liberals' preferred method of assistance. He kept this sordid affair a secret for 17 years.

In 2010, he even denied that he had ever been offered a bribe. After remaining silent for 17 years, he decided to speak out after an investigation was launched into these issues in 2011.

The leader of the NDP could be called to appear before the Charbonneau commission to explain his actions. The leader of the NDP hid his knowledge of corruption from the public for two years before deciding to break his silence last week.

The leader of the NDP must explain why he kept this a secret for 17 years.

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[English]

ELIJAH HARPER

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today marks the beginning of Aboriginal Awareness Week, a time to recognize and celebrate the history and ongoing achievements of aboriginal peoples across Canada.

The late Elijah Harper is an example of leadership and inspiration. Last Friday Canada lost a great leader in Elijah Harper, a man who stood strong for aboriginal peoples and worked tirelessly throughout his life to ensure that the voice of indigenous peoples was, and continues to be, respected.

A memory of mine, which I will never forget, took place inside the Manitoba legislature. I was able to witness first-hand when Mr. Harper, in 1990, voted no on several consecutive days. By voting no, he single-handedly prevented the Meech Lake accord from passing the Manitoba legislature.

His actions then continue to be an enduring reminder of the need to respect the voice of aboriginal peoples. Mr. Harper was also a chief, a member of Parliament, a husband, a father and so much more.

On behalf of the Liberal Party of Canada and the residents of my home province, we offer our condolences to his family.

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

Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP has known about corruption in Quebec politics since 1994, yet he chose to keep it secret for 17 years. In 2010, he even denied to the media and to Canadians ever having been offered a bribe by the mayor of Laval. The leader of the NDP kept his first-hand knowledge of corruption from the public and was only forced to speak up and backtrack on his denial after corruption investigations began in Quebec.

The leader of the NDP should be investigated by the RCMP for concealing his knowledge of corruption. As parliamentarians we must uphold a culture of accountability. The NDP owes Canadians an explanation for its leader's 17-year cover-up on corruption in Quebec.

* * *

CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have had a difficult time following the Conservatives' twisted train of logic on their latest scandal. From the start of the great Senate cover-up, Conservatives have flip-flopped with great conviction. There is the parliamentary secretary for transport who boldly defended this unethical behaviour declaring, "Nigel Wright did an exceptionally honourable thing. He reached into his own resources, wrote a personal cheque..."

The member for Calgary Centre claimed the resignation of the Prime Minister's chief of staff and others is proof of "...the highest ethical standards". Then there was this morning's Oscar-worthy performance of a Prime Minister trying to sweep it all under the rug before he heads out the back door and jets off to Peru.

My constituents want the corruption to end. They want the guilty parties to be punished and they want some genuine accountability here in Ottawa. It is too bad Canadians have to wait until 2015 to move beyond the old line parties and get the honest change that they deserve.

* * *

• (1415)

DOUG FINLEY

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a great Canadian has passed.

Doug Finley was born overseas and never lost his magnificent Scottish accent, but he loved this country from the top of his head to the tips of his gillie brogues. He was a gifted political organizer. He was discreet, loyal, a wise counsellor to the mighty and a wise guide to the young and idealistic. He was an idealist himself who believed profoundly in democracy and who devoted the last decade of his life to pursuing this ideal. He was my friend and I miss him deeply.

Above all, Doug Finley was a family man. His love for his wife Diane was legendary. His daughter and his grandchildren were his life's joy.

His accomplishments took place in the theatre of partisan and electoral politics, but Doug had the respect of members on both sides

Oral Questions

of both Houses of the Parliament of Canada. I ask everyone here today to join me in paying tribute to a great Canadian patriot, Doug Finley.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

ETHICS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the going gets tough, the tough get going, to Peru apparently.

The Prime Minister's chief of staff gave Mike Duffy a \$90,000 cheque. In exchange Duffy paid—

Some hon. members: Oh! Oh!

The Speaker: Order. The hon. Leader of the Opposition has the floor.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair: Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's chief of staff gave Mike Duffy a \$90,000 cheque. In exchange, Duffy paid off illegal expenses, stopped co-operating with auditors, and the PMO said in writing that they would go easy on him. In his own words, Senator Duffy "stayed silent on the orders of the Prime Minister's Office". A secret cash payment from the Prime Minister's chief of staff was negotiated by the Prime Minister's own lawyer.

Will the Prime Minister call in the RCMP and release all documents related to this secret backroom deal?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has been very clear that he was not aware of the payment until last week, after it had been reported publicly in the media. The Prime Minister spoke very loudly and very clearly this morning. Furthermore, this matter has been referred to two independent bodies for review. We look forward to the results of these reviews.

[Translation]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, many questions remain unanswered about the secret deal made by the Prime Minister's Office, the report that was doctored to clear a senator and the so-called gift of \$90,000.

When did the Prime Minister find out about the negotiations between his chief of staff, Nigel Wright, and Senator Duffy? Was the new chief of staff, Ray Novak, aware of this scheme?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was not aware of the payment until last week after it was reported in the media, and neither was his current chief of staff.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Mike Duffy agreed to "stay silent on the orders of the PMO". In exchange, the Prime Minister's Office agreed to cover the cost of the senator's fraudulent expenses.

Oral Questions

Why were taxpayer-funded lawyers used to negotiate this secret backroom deal between the Prime Minister's chief of staff and Senator Duffy? Was taxpayers' money used to bankroll Senate-gate, yes or no?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it will come as no surprise to the Leader of the Opposition that I reject much of the premise of his question. I have been very clear and the government has been very clear that the Prime Minister was not aware of this payment until media reports surfaced last week. Let me be very clear on that point.

• (1420)

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this morning's press conference left us with many unanswered questions. We still do not know if the Prime Minister knew about his chief of staff's sudden generosity or if he had anything to do with the whitewashing of the Senate audit. His role has yet to become clear.

I have a very simple question. What did the Prime Minister know and when did he know it?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one has to be able to roll during question period.

The government has provided a very clear answer. I cannot be more clear. I cannot be more specific. I did indicate to the Leader of the Opposition that the Prime Minister was not aware of this payment until after it surfaced in the media last week. I cannot be any more clear to the House and I cannot be any more clear to the member opposite.

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are always going to have a problem with credibility. They have no credibility whatsoever. They always wait until the last second to act. Then, they take us for fools.

The Conservatives have still not provided a shred of evidence to support their claims on this issue.

The Prime Minister is known for micromanaging his government, yet, the Conservatives now expect us to believe that he knew nothing about the schemes concocted by his chief of staff and his lawyer, Benjamin Perrin. Come on.

Are the Conservatives really saying that this complex scheme was carried out without the Prime Minister knowing anything about it?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have stood in this place and I have answered the question categorically as to when the Prime Minister was made aware of this issue. I could not be any clearer.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is clear now that the Conservative government under the Prime Minister has lost its moral compass. The Prime Minister's right-hand man secretly paid a parliamentarian \$90,000 to obstruct an audit. Canadians deserve better. They deserve actual transparency and accountability.

What precisely was the secret deal that the Prime Minister's Office made with Senator Duffy? Show us the documents.

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have said it before and I will say it again. The Prime

Minister was not aware of the payment until last week when reports surfaced in the media.

Our understanding is there is no document. Again, I am very happy to have responded to both questions the member asked.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is in it up to his neck, and the members opposite know it.

[Translation]

It is now clear that the government has lost its moral compass under this Prime Minister. The Prime Minister's right-hand man made a secret \$90,000 deal with a parliamentarian in order to obstruct an audit. Canadians are demanding real transparency.

I am going to repeat my question: what precisely was the secret deal that the Prime Minister's Office made with Senator Duffy?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister obviously not having known of the payment could not know about any alleged agreement to which the leader of the third party refers.

This matter has been referred to two independent bodies that will review it. We look forward to hearing their comments following.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians work hard and play by the rules. They pay their own debts. Apparently, when the Conservatives break the rules, they get their debts secretly paid off by their friends in high places. It boggles the mind. Nobody over there even thinks anybody did anything wrong except get caught.

When will the Conservatives release this secret document, allow for a full investigation and, while they are at it, apologize to Canadians?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect to a legal agreement to which the member opposite refers, our understanding is there is no such agreement.

This issue has been referred to two independent authorities that will look into the matter. We look forward to them reporting back to Parliament and to Canadians.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we now learn that the Prime Minister's key legal adviser, Benjamin Perrin, helped Nigel Wright with this secret deal that included a \$90,000 payout and a promise to have Conservative senators "go easy" on Mike Duffy's rip-off of the taxpayer.

The Prime Minister has praised Mike Duffy for leadership, he has praised Wright for being honourable, but he has not come clean with the Canadian people.

Oral Questions

Who else was involved in this plan to obstruct the audit? Does the Prime Minister think that it is okay for taxpayer-funded lawyers to obstruct investigations into taxpayer rip-offs? Does the Prime Minister have a problem with that?

•(1425)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. No taxpayer money was involved with respect to this reimbursement.

It is clear from the committee's report over in the other place that these expenses should not have been claimed. The government and no one in this caucus is disputing that fundamental fact.

On Sunday, Mr. Wright took the responsible decision and tendered his resignation, and that resignation was immediately accepted.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with answers like that, it is like the Conservatives are taking their crisis management courses from Rob Ford. We are talking about abuse of the public trust here.

Today, the Prime Minister blew off the Nigel Wright scandal as a mere distraction, but he failed to tell Canadians whether he thought it was wrong or illegal, wrong to make secret payouts, wrong to obstruct an investigation.

The Prime Minister called in the cops on Helena Guergis and Bruce Carson. Given the seriousness of these allegations, will he call in the cops against Nigel Wright and Mike Duffy?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me once again be very clear. This issue has already been referred to two independent authorities that will appropriately look into this matter and report back to Parliament and to Canadians. This government looks forward to the findings of those two independent reports.

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Justice may be aware that section 16 of the Parliament of Canada Act states that every person who gives, offers or promises to any member of the Senate any compensation for services relating to a proceeding, contract, claim or controversy before the Senate is guilty of an indictable offence.

Does the Minister of Justice believe the PM's former chief of staff may have committed this crime when he gave Senator Duffy \$90,000 as part of a cover-up deal?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, it will come as no surprise to my colleague, the member opposite, that I reject much of the premise of his preamble.

Let me just say this. The Prime Minister was not aware of this reimbursement until after it became public through media reports. The chief of staff has tendered his resignation. There are two independent authorities looking into this matter. We will allow them the time to do their work and we will await their findings.

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to try again with the Minister of Justice.

Let us remind ourselves that the PMO handed out \$90,000 to keep a senator quiet. We have another provision that is relevant. Section 119 of the Criminal Code states that any person who offers an office holder any money, valuable consideration or employment in respect

of anything done or omitted by that person in their official capacity is guilty of an offence.

Does the minister agree that the Prime Minister's former chief of staff may have committed this crime?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, I reject much of the premise of the question from the member opposite.

Let me say a number of things. One, the Prime Minister became aware of this issue last week after media reports surfaced. Right now, there are two independent authorities looking into this matter. Let us give them the opportunity to do that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, either the Prime Minister knew that a report on his caucus members was coming and that his chief of staff had arranged a secret \$90,000 deal to let Senator Duffy off the hook, or the Prime Minister knowingly chose to ignore the information.

It is either a cover-up or incompetence. We all know that the Prime Minister is a control freak. This story reeks of cover-up.

Could we at least know when the Prime Minister was informed of the content of the report? At that point, what directives were given?

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the other place had auditors come in. A committee of that place looked into this matter. It came to the conclusion that these expenses should not have been claimed. No one in this government believes these expenses should have been claimed, and that undoubtedly reflects the conclusion of the report at the end of the day.

I understand the report did reflect that a reimbursement had been made, which was obviously factual.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in a one-year period, the Prime Minister has lost three ministers, two senators and one chief of staff to scandals.

The Conservatives promised to clean house in Ottawa, but it turns out that they are just as crooked as the Liberals before them. The only way for the Conservatives to get out of this is to start telling the truth instead of claiming in unison that they are upset.

Nigel Wright must explain his actions. Senator Duffy must disclose what was in that secret deal. Canadians deserve to know the whole truth.

Will the government help us shed light on this scandal or will it keep pressing on without answering any questions?

•(1430)

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in this place, I have answered the questions that the members opposite have put forward.

Oral Questions

There are two independent authorities that are looking into this matter. Let us give them the time to do that work. We look forward to their findings.

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first there was the RCMP visit to Conservative offices and the in and out scandal, and now things keep getting worse for the Conservative government.

Here is another one of their schemes: the airwaves are now inundated with ads touting a jobs program that does not even exist yet. Negotiations with the provinces are ongoing. Parliament has not approved it. It is as though the government were advertising Senate reform.

Why are the Conservatives spending taxpayers' money on promoting a program that may never see the light of day?

[English]

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we want to ensure that, moving forward, the provinces have an opportunity to negotiate with us and to put in the hands of employers and employees the opportunity to train.

We know we have skills mismatches across the country. We know Canadians need opportunities to be trained. Our initiative is to help employers be matched with employees. I was in B.C. just this last week. They were talking about how people were walking in asking for this opportunity, because we want to link Canadians with jobs.

That is what we are about. We are focused on the economy and creating jobs for Canadians, unlike the opposition.

* * *

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, here is another example of how the Conservative government works. An investigation has revealed that at ACOA, folks decided to rig the deal so that Kevin MacAdam, a failed Conservative candidate and former political aid to the Minister of National Defence, would get the job.

ACOA is all about advancing economic development for Atlantic Canada; it is not a job bank for Conservatives.

Will the Conservatives finally come clean about their role in this job-rigging scandal and subsequent cover-up of the four senior ACOA executives?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of National Revenue and Minister for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the independent investigation by the Public Service Commission did not find evidence of any wrongdoing or influence on the part of the ministers or political staff in this matter. The Public Service Commission report clearly states, "No evidence was found

to support allegations of political influence in the ACOA investigations".

ACOA has taken action on the recommendations of the Public Service Commission.

* * *

ETHICS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it was in 2005 that the Prime Minister puffed up his chest and said "If anybody violates the public trust under my watch, they are going to prison". Now his tune has changed. "All governments make mistakes" is what he says today.

Was it a mistake to continue to hand out plum patronage appointments to their pork-barrelling friends? Was it just a mistake to run a bunch of self-serving ads for programs that do not even exist? Was it a mistake to have the Prime Minister's Office cut a \$90,000 cheque to buy the silence of a Conservative senator?

The public trust has been violated. It has been abused. In fact, Conservatives have stomped all over it. What happened to the promise they made in 2005? Who is going to jail?

[Translation]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was not aware of this reimbursement until after it became public through media reports. I cannot make it any clearer.

[English]

This morning the Prime Minister spoke to Canadians and to some parliamentarians and was very clear. People who come to government should have the public interest first and foremost as their priority, and those who want to advance their private interests will be shown the door, as they properly should.

[Translation]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, ordinary Canadians do not have any special, secret deals to clear their debt. The question is simple: did the Prime Minister ask if the arrangement complied with Senate rules, the Conflict of Interest Act, the Criminal Code and the Parliament of Canada Act, which state that prohibited monetary compensation cannot be offered to a senator and that anyone who makes such an offer can be imprisoned?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister was not aware of this reimbursement until after it became public through media reports.

● (1435)

[English]

This issue is already before two independent officers to review the situation. Let us give them the time to do that. We look forward to the outcome of those reviews.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, ordinary Canadians cannot get their debts wiped out and their records whitewashed by the Prime Minister's Office.

Oral Questions

What mechanisms did the government use to “go easy” on Senator Duffy as laid out in the agreement between the two lawyers? What authority did the Prime Minister have to supposedly promise a sanitized audit report, allegedly an independent evaluation, of inappropriate expenses?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, how could the Prime Minister have expectations on a reimbursement that he was not aware of until it became public? It is just that simple.

The Prime Minister was not aware of the payment, as I have said. The member opposite talks of some legal document I am not aware of. My understanding is that no such document exists.

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, ordinary Canadians do not have wealthy Conservative friends who can pay their debts and then whitewash official reports.

When was the Prime Minister made aware that Conservative senators on the audit committee had been asked to delete certain sections of the report pertaining to Senator Duffy's wrongdoing?

Could he tell us who gave that order to the Conservative senators? Was it the Prime Minister, his chief of staff or the government leader in the Senate?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is very clear from the committee's report that the committee concludes that these expenses should not have been claimed. No one on the committee disputes that. No one in the government disputes that. That, in our judgment, is a fact.

The reality is, and I understand this report did reflect, that a reimbursement was made. This issue has been referred to two independent bodies. Let us await their findings.

* * *

GOVERNMENT APPOINTMENTS

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is bad enough that the Conservatives stack EI boards with patronage appointments, but it also turns out they are making money off them.

Many of their appointees contribute money to the Conservative Party. Treasury Board guidelines and the PCO are clear. These appointees must avoid all political activities, including making donations.

What action has the government taken to investigate what appears to be a clear violation of the rules? Will the government ensure that the Conservative Party returns these donations?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the boards in question no longer exist, and they were recently replaced by our government with the Social Security Tribunal. Members of the new Social Security Tribunal are appointed by merit. They undergo a rigorous selection process, and they have to meet significant experience and competency criteria that are required to do that job.

[Translation]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives claim that they want to avoid political donations

that contravene the rules, but their solution is to appoint their defeated candidates to positions that they are in no way qualified to hold. Those who are appointed simply say that the appointments are rewards.

Just like the former Conservative organizer in Quebec, another defeated Conservative candidate, Dominique Bellemare, was recently given a spot on the Social Security Tribunal as a consolation prize.

Since they are unable to stop handing out partisan appointments, will the Conservatives apply the ethics rules and force those they put in place to stop these political donations?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have already said, the boards in question no longer exist. Our government replaced them with the Social Security Tribunal.

Members of the Social Security Tribunal are appointed by merit and must undergo a rigorous selection process to ensure that they have the required experience and skills needed for the job.

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EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Social Security Tribunal is exactly where party friends are appointed.

Employment insurance is supposed to protect regional seasonal economies across Canada, but for the Conservatives, it is just a big bureaucracy where they put party friends.

The employment insurance reform could have a serious impact on employees who depend on job sharing to make a living. There is much confusion even in New Brunswick about who can be employed in the public service and who cannot.

Instead of focusing on partisan appointments, will the Conservatives work with the provinces to come up with solutions to their fiasco?

[English]

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have put forward reforms to employment insurance to better connect Canadians with available jobs, and this is something we have been focused on like a laser, as a certain minister has said in the past, to make sure Canadians have opportunities. Let us be very clear. The reforms to employment insurance, making sure we move forward with the Canada jobs grant, the 5,000 new internships that are available to young Canadians, making sure we increase the enabling accessibility fund so that individuals with disabilities have opportunities to be employed; these are all things we are doing to better connect Canadians with jobs so they can be prosperous in the future, unlike the opposition.

Oral Questions

●(1440)

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thousands of seasonal workers are wondering how their industries are going to survive the Conservative attack. However, while they are worrying about the future, the Conservatives are advertising a job training program that does not even exist. Based on the Conservatives' inability to work respectfully with the provinces, it probably never will.

Why would the Conservatives rather waste tax dollars on false advertising than actually fix the mess they have made out of the EI system? How much are they throwing away on this misleading self-promotion?

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my question for the member opposite is: Why will they not get on top of promoting opportunities for individuals to have jobs? That is exactly what this is doing. We have put forward opportunities for Canadians to have jobs or gain the skills so they can be employed in what is available. The opposition members continue to vote against these things, whether it was the budget, economic action plan 2012, or in their case, already stating that they will be voting against economic action plan 2013.

Bad on you. We want to support Canadians getting jobs. I wonder why the opposition will not get on board.

The Speaker: I will just remind the parliamentary secretary to address her comments through the Chair, not directly to her colleagues.

The hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul.

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ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for more than a quarter century, aboriginal women living on reserve have been without access to the legal rights they deserve.

Could the Minister for Status of Women update the House on the actions this government has taken to address this inequality that has stood for far too long?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to tell the House that last week I announced a project in northern Alberta that will support 200 aboriginal girls between the ages of 8 and 14 in addressing violence and abuse. We are working in partnership with representatives from the Bigstone Cree Nation Women's Emergency Shelter, the Bigstone Community School, the Bigstone Cree Nation family and children services and also the RCMP.

Today we have gone even further. Today the Standing Committee on the Status of Women finished its clause-by-clause review of Bill S-2, and we all know that in situations of family violence it would allow judges to enforce protection orders to remove a violent partner from the home. This is an incredible day for aboriginal women and girls, and I want to thank the Conservative members from the status of women committee for getting the job done.

PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the minister could do something to support aboriginal businesses.

These Conservatives came to power promising transparency and accountability, saying rigged contracts were a thing of the past. It is obvious in the wake of mounting court cases that not much has changed. Just last year Veritaaq pleaded guilty to bid rigging. Public Works and Government Services then awarded it new contracts worth millions of dollars. Under the Conservatives' new alleged tough rules, the company would still not be blacklisted. The government is favouring bid riggers over honest Canadian businesses.

Is this the fairness to business and fiscal accountability Canadians were promised?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not the case. The member knows we have implemented and developed a tough integrity framework to ensure companies that are convicted of crimes cannot do business with public works and are being banned from bidding on contracts. Other departments have also begun to implement these same tough integrity measures, including Defence Construction Canada. In the case of CRG, which received a contract from Defence Construction Canada, I contacted DCC myself, and I understand it is applying the same integrity framework that public works has applied to its own contracting and it will be banning this company from bidding on any contracts with it as well.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have left the door open so that companies found guilty of collusion can bid on public contracts. Two companies received 500 contracts from the Conservative government after being found guilty of collusion for bid rigging. Unbelievable.

How is it that companies found guilty can still bid on public contracts? When will the Conservatives close the door once and for all on companies that cheat and misuse taxpayers' money?

●(1445)

[*English*]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Public Works and Government Services and Minister for Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have shut the door on this particular company, CRG, which has been convicted of a crime. We have developed a tough integrity framework to ensure that any company that has been convicted of a crime or any illegal activity cannot bid on contracts with public works and will be banned from bidding.

Other departments have also begun to implement these same measures, including Defence Construction Canada. It has assured me that it is implementing the same tough measures and that this company in question will, from now on, be banned from bidding on any contracts with Defence Construction Canada.

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GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have pushed the bar even lower by advertising a job program that does not even exist. Legislation is still months away, and the provinces have not even agreed to it yet. Advertising experts are saying this is downright misleading.

Why are they spending \$190,000 a minute on *Hockey Night in Canada* ads for a program that does not even exist?

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think I have been relatively clear already today. We are about creating jobs and making sure Canadians have the skills they need to fill those jobs that are available. We are providing an opportunity for employers to be linked to those employees, and that is exactly what we are doing. We are making sure Canadians know about the skills opportunities that are available to them. We are making sure employers know this grant is available to them as well.

I encourage the opposition to get on board and make sure Canadians receive the skills they need so they can fill those jobs and we can grow our economy, because if they do not get on board, I guess we will just have to do it ourselves.

* * *

[Translation]

LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, anyone appointed by the Conservatives clearly enjoys playing with taxpayers' money. After what happened with Senator Duffy, Senator Wallin and Senator Brazeau, now we learn that *el señor* Daniel Caron also treated himself, spending \$170,000 of taxpayers' money at the Rideau Club and on trips to Puerto Rico and Australia in 2011 and 2012. Meanwhile, at Library and Archives Canada, he was gutting important programs and muzzling archivists with a code of conduct that was controversial, to say the least.

Will the Conservatives finally do the right thing and appoint a serious and dedicated chief librarian at Library and Archives Canada?

[English]

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I made it very clear both in the House and privately to Mr. Daniel Caron when he was president of Library and Archives Canada that his spending was irresponsible and out of line with what taxpayers expect from the president of Library and Archives Canada. I communicated that to him directly. The next day he offered his resignation, and I was not sad when he did that.

Oral Questions

ETHICS

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, ordinary Canadians do not have access to rich Conservative friends to pay their debts. A week ago the government was calling Mike Duffy an “honourable man”, showing “leadership” and doing “the right thing”. The Prime Minister knows that a secret payment of \$90,000 was made by his most senior official to shut down a forensic audit of Duffy's illegal expenses, to pervert the Senate's official report on those expenses and to block any further investigation.

With whom and when did this corruption begin, and will the government table all emails pertaining to this insidious scheme?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it will not come as any surprise that I reject much of the preamble of the question the member opposite raises.

Let me say this. A committee in the other place that was looking into this brought in some outside auditors. The conclusion of that report was that these claims never should have been made.

No one in the government, certainly no one in this place, rejects that conclusion. I understand that in the report it was mentioned that these expenses had been reimbursed, as is what had happened.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is about unethical, possibly illegal, behaviour in the Prime Minister's inner circle.

All of last week and again today the Prime Minister showed nothing but contempt for ordinary Canadians: no answers, no accountability, no apology.

Ordinary Canadians do not have a sugar daddy in the Prime Minister's office. Ordinary Canadians pay their debts. Ordinary Canadians do not get to blockade an audit, whitewash a Senate report and pocket \$90,000.

Who gave the orders for this Conservative corruption? Table the emails.

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a bunch of wild accusations and conclusions from the member for Wascana. I am not surprised. This is not the first time.

Let me say this. There are two independent bodies reviewing this matter. Let them conduct that review. We look forward to hearing the findings of that review.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have asked the government to come clean on Senategate. Unfortunately, we have yet to hear the truth from the Conservatives.

Canadians deserve answers. The Minister of Foreign Affairs is repeatedly saying, “two independent authorities” are looking into the matter. Can the Minister of Foreign Affairs tell us who these authorities are, and is one of them the RCMP? If not, why not?

Oral Questions

● (1450)

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the caucus of the House leader of the official opposition has made two referrals to two independent bodies. That is the answer.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fact that the Minister of Foreign Affairs will not even answer such a simple, straightforward question calls in the idea that the Conservatives will not be accountable.

The fact is that the Prime Minister called the cops on Helena Guergis and Bruce Carson.

Canadians deserve better. Canadians deserve the truth. Given the seriousness of these allegations, will he call the police on Nigel Wright and Mike Duffy, yes or no?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has been very clear. It is a tremendous honour to serve as a parliamentarian, and each and every person who is given that privilege, that responsibility, should be standing up for the public interest and not their own private interests. If they want to do that, they should be out the door.

That is the view of this party, that is the view of this government and that is the view of this Prime Minister.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last week Vince Li, the man found not criminally responsible for beheading and cannibalizing Tim McLean on a Greyhound bus, was granted escorted leave by the independent Manitoba Criminal Code review board into the communities of Selkirk, Winnipeg and Lockport.

In my view, this is an insult to the family of Tim McLean. The review board did not take into consideration the rights of the victim in its decision, nor did it put public safety first.

Canadians expect their government to keep them safe from such high-risk individuals. Could the Minister of Justice please inform this House what action the government is taking to address the concerns of Canadians?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank this member for his advocacy on this issue on behalf of his constituents.

Our government has responded to the concerns of victims and provincial Attorneys General by introducing the not criminally responsible reform act.

The legislation would ensure public safety and that the rights of victims come first. It would also create a new high-risk designation to protect the public from certain individuals found not criminally responsible.

This government has always put victims first, and we always will.

ETHICS

Ms. Judy Foote (Random—Burin—St. George's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, ordinary Canadians cannot get a special Conservative deal to wipe out their expenses.

The Prime Minister previously said he personally looked at Senator Wallin's expenses and they were fine.

Did the government learn any new details of Senator Wallin's expenses last week that it was not aware of months ago?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Let me see what time it is, Mr. Speaker.

The Prime Minister did say in this House with respect to Senator Wallin that the Senator's expenses were in line with other parliamentarians from Saskatchewan.

The Senate has referred her expenses for review, and we look forward to receiving the results of that review.

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CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is time to get rid of the Senate, that is what time it is.

[*Translation*]

The more time passes, the more the residents of northern Ontario feel betrayed by the Conservatives, who, in addition to moving services to Toronto and Ottawa, are also cutting funding to crucial organizations that help francophone permanent residents and refugees settle in francophone communities in northern Ontario.

This translates into fewer workers, fewer jobs and less assistance to francophone refugees.

Why are the Conservatives once again going after francophones in northern Ontario?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just met with the president of the Fédération des communautés francophones et acadienne du Canada specifically regarding our strategy to increase francophone immigration outside Quebec. Our target is 4%.

In fact, francophone employers are exempt from having to get a labour market opinion, and this will help them find workers in regions outside Quebec. This is meant to strengthen Canada's linguistic duality.

* * *

[*English*]

FOOD SAFETY

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian consumers are our first priority when it comes to food safety. Our government is committed to strengthening food safety for Canadian families. In addition to the \$150 million in past budgets to enhance food safety, our government also passed the Safe Food for Canadians Act, which increases penalties for those who risk food safety and gives inspectors more tools to do their jobs.

Points of Order

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture please update this House on further measures being taken by our government to boost Canada's food safety system?

• (1455)

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Kitchener—Conestoga for his hard work regarding food safety.

I am pleased to announce that last week the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food unveiled the safe food for Canadians action plan. This plan puts into place mandatory requirements that will strengthen E. coli testing in federally registered beef plants, including increased testing and mandatory labelling for tenderized beef.

These initiatives have been very well received by industry and in fact the Canadian Cattlemen's Association said that, “the new rules and requirements for beef outlined in the Safe Food for Canadians Action Plan will further strengthen Canada’s food safety system.”

* * *

[Translation]

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week, the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities made a ridiculous comment that only makes sense to the Conservatives.

He said that instead of funding researchers who never find anything, he would rather fund finders.

With an attitude like that, it is no wonder that the latest report on the state of Canada's science, technology and innovation system is so damning for the Conservative government.

Instead of making industry pay for research, why do the Conservatives not invest more in research?

[English]

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the member opposite had done her own research, she would know that is not what the gentleman said.

I want to thank STIC for its report. In fact, the report concludes, “Canada's success in the 21st century will be determined by our ability to harness science, technology and innovation to drive economic prosperity and societal well-being.”

I would like to tell my friends opposite that there are hundreds of millions of dollars for basic research in this budget, just like all the others. Will they finally stop pretending and vote for science?

* * *

[Translation]

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the federal government has

launched a costly ad campaign to promote a job training program, even though the Quebec government has categorically refused to participate in it. This program does not exist.

The government is making cuts to public safety, employment insurance and public services, yet it is wasting hundreds of thousands of dollars on propaganda. An ad can cost \$95,000, which is almost the same amount as the cheque the Prime Minister's former right-hand man gave to Senator Duffy. That is a big chunk of change.

Will the minister put an end to these misleading ads, yes or no?

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has a responsibility to inform Canadians about the programs and benefits available to them.

For example, this year, the government is implementing new measures to help Canadians, including the new Canada job grant, in order to help Canadians get training so they can find a job or find a better job.

The government is promoting these measures because it wants Canadians to take advantage of them.

[English]

The Speaker: That concludes question period for today.

The hon. member for Papineau on a point of order.

Mr. Justin Trudeau: Mr. Speaker, it is not three o'clock yet.

The Speaker: It looks like three o'clock to me on that clock.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: It is certainly three o'clock now.

The hon. member for Papineau on a point of order.

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POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Foreign Affairs mentioned a couple of times two investigative processes to look into the Senate allegations. I am just curious if the minister would like to explain or inform the House which two independent bodies are looking into this already.

• (1500)

The Speaker: That did sound more like a question than a point of order, so perhaps the member for Papineau would take that up at a future question period.

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 18 petitions.

* * *

[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the sixth report of the Standing Committee on Official Languages.

[English]

In accordance with its order of reference of Monday, February 25, 2013, the committee has considered vote 20 under Privy Council in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014, and reports the same.

HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House this afternoon to move concurrence in the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities presented on Wednesday, December 12, 2012, with respect to labour and skills shortages in Canada. The subtitle of the report is "Addressing Current and Future Challenges".

There is no doubt that a vital competitive economy in the global era requires the development of a skilled workforce that provides Canadian employers with the workers they need and that provides Canadian workers with the opportunities they deserve. In order to achieve that goal Canada needs to find the right match between skills and employment opportunities so that we do not suffer from skills shortages and high unemployment at the same time.

My NDP colleagues and I supported the standing committee's report on labour shortages in Canada, and we were particularly pleased to see recommendations on incentives for training and labour mobility. However, we also think there are some important areas in which the recommendations did not go far enough in addressing the crucial challenges that Canada faces.

Let me begin with some general areas of concern that were raised in testimony by a number of witnesses who appeared before our committee.

It is true that labour shortages were already being felt prior to the 2008-2009 recession, especially in the western provinces. The recession eased this pressure, but already shortages are reappearing in certain regions and sectors.

Given the aging population, it is likely that labour and skills shortages will increase, but this will not be true for all regions nor for all occupational groups. While shortages may be less severe in

occupations requiring fewer qualifications, low-skilled occupations are also experiencing shortages, especially in regions with strong and rapid economic growth.

The first finding of the study, which was reiterated by many witnesses, is that no single solution will magically solve the challenges caused by labour and skills shortages. Various complementary solutions must be identified.

One solution that was mentioned often by the witnesses who appeared as part of the study was to make all the essential information on future labour needs available so that educational programs can be created and modified accordingly, and so that consequently young people can choose occupations that will be in high demand.

Obviously that will not be possible without high-quality labour market information. The holders of these data must work together to avoid duplication and find ways to improve both the quality of the information as well as the distribution of all LMI products to the people who can benefit the most from its use.

Another solution the committee heard throughout the study was to maximize the untapped potential of individuals and certain groups of the Canadian population that have a lower participation rate or a higher unemployment rate than average, such as mature workers, people with disabilities, aboriginal peoples and recent immigrants. These groups represent a huge pool of untapped talents and could help address a significant part of the skills shortages.

Other suggestions made by witnesses include increasing labour force mobility, increasing awareness of trades and professions in demand that are not popular with young people, providing workers with adequate on-the-job training, increasing the level of basic skills, improving worker productivity and increasing reliance on partnerships between various levels of government, companies, educational institutions, students and workers.

Of course, special mention was made of the temporary foreign worker program, around which there was a significant consensus that there had to be reform. Given the recent media spotlight on the temporary foreign worker program, I do not think that will surprise any member in the House.

The recommendations in the report address many of these concerns. In fact, there were 38 recommendations made by the committee, most of which my NDP colleagues and I agreed with. Let me re-emphasize the word "most", because as one can imagine, on a Conservative-dominated committee, much of the language in this report is both self-congratulatory and slanted to the needs of employers only. Nonetheless, we did find some significant common ground.

Routine Proceedings

There were, however, also areas of significant disagreement, and I want to spend the better part of my remaining time on those areas. These areas represent a huge missed opportunity, and I would hope that moving forward, the government will take a second look at our minority report and use it to shape additional measures that were lacking in the original recommendations.

Let me begin with comments about labour market information.

Time and time again the committee heard from witnesses that labour market information in Canada is not good enough. We heard that the data are not granular enough and do not allow for sufficient breakdown by occupation or region. The data are also not published frequently enough and do not allow for high-quality projections of shortages in the future. In fact, the committee's final report offers numerous instances in which the testimony from industries and the data available from current surveys disagree on whether or not there is or will be a skills or labour shortage in a given industry.

● (1505)

The Certified General Accountants Association recently published an examination of available sources of data that concluded that our current LMI is not good enough to enable policy-makers to effectively deal with labour shortages. It recommends "...closing the statistical information gap and improving the relevance and reliability of labour market statistics at the regional and occupational levels".

Given that good LMI is the linchpin to good skills training and labour force development policy as well as crucial to good immigration policy and management of the temporary foreign worker program, we find the report's recommendation on LMI to be very weak indeed. We need more than better publicity for the data that are already being produced.

The experts on the advisory panel on labour market information established by the Forum of Labour Market Ministers have already provided an excellent blueprint of the steps that could be taken to improve the collection, analysis and use of LMI in Canada. For that reason, my NDP colleagues and I recommended that the government take steps to implement the recommendations made in the final report of the advisory panel on labour market information.

We also noted in our report that the weakness of our labour market information has been exacerbated by cuts to Statistics Canada and its surveys and by the elimination of core funding for sector councils, which play a crucial role in bringing together industry partners and provide very useful sector-specific LMI. Therefore, we also recommended that Statistics Canada be provided with the funding it needs to improve labour force-related surveys and that core funding be restored to sector councils.

Moving on to a second area that merited additional attention, I want to focus next on the need to develop the Canadian labour force.

While employers are experiencing shortages of both skilled and low-skilled labour, unemployment in Canada remains high, with six unemployed Canadians for every job vacancy. The Conservatives' response has been to blame the unemployed for their unemployment, to reduce access to employment insurance while trying to force Canadians to move to other parts of the country and to use the temporary foreign worker program to drive down wages.

By contrast, New Democrats believe that Canadian workers and employers benefit when Canadians are given the tools they need to be able to take available jobs. That is why we believe that investments in skills training are so important. We laud the report's recommendation that the government consider incentives to employers to invest in on-the-job training. However, we also recommend that the government review its bilateral agreements with the provinces to ensure that they provide maximum benefit to Canadians in need of training. For instance, the fact that the largest part of funding for skills training provided through labour market development agreements is limited to those who qualify for employment insurance benefits makes no sense when more than 6 in 10 unemployed Canadians are not qualifying for EI.

Similarly, we believe that Canadians need support for labour mobility rather than to be threatened with the loss of their EI benefits if they do not move for the jobs. We are pleased that the report recommends support for a tax credit for travel and lodging for those working more than 80 kilometres away from their residence. This is a proposal I have been pushing for years by introducing Bill C-201, an act to amend the Income Tax Act for travel and accommodation deduction for tradespersons. The building and construction trades have been lobbying for this bill for over 30 years, and it continues to be one of the key priorities at each and every one of their legislative conferences.

In every Parliament the government has made vague promises of progress to come; then each Parliament ends without concrete action. The time to rectify that situation is now, and I appreciate the committee's support in this regard. The ask is simple: allow tradespersons and apprentices to deduct travel and accommodation expenses from their taxable income so that they can secure and maintain employment at a construction site that is more than 80 kilometres away from their home.

At a time when some regions of the country suffer from high unemployment while others suffer from temporary skilled labour shortages, the bill offers a solution to both. Best of all, it is revenue neutral for the government because the cost associated with the income tax cut is more than made up by the savings in employment insurance.

Now that the Conservatives have a majority in the House of Commons, there are no more excuses. The government can and must support the bill and act unequivocally to support Canada's building and construction trades. I am hoping to be able to test the government's resolve on this issue in the very near future.

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Let me just give a quick shout out to some of the people from my hometown of Hamilton who have been instrumental in putting this issue on Parliament's agenda. In particular, I am thinking of Joe Beattie, Tim Penfold, Geoff Roman, Gary Elleker, Dave MacMaster, Paul Leger and all the members of the Hamilton-Brantford Ontario Building and Construction Trades Council, whose support for the bill has been unwavering and who, frankly, were the first to bring the issue to my attention.

● (1510)

I could talk about my bill and the need for its speedy adoption all day. Nonetheless, I recognize that my time here is limited and I also want to get some other issues on the record with respect to the current skills shortage.

One of the other barriers to labour mobility that was raised over and over again was the lack of affordable housing. Regions that are experiencing an economic boom cannot develop housing fast enough to offer workers reasonable accommodation at prices they can afford. Therefore, in our minority report we recommended that the government support NDP Bill C-400, which called on the government to create a national affordable housing strategy in co-operation with the provinces and territories.

Members will know that in the time since we tabled our report, the Conservatives defeated that bill in this House. To New Democrats and housing activists from coast to coast to coast, that was a devastating rejection of a desperately needed program. Canada remains the only G8 country without a housing strategy, while 1.5 million families and individuals are unable to access adequate, affordable housing. It is a national disgrace. Certainly the evidence we heard at committee confirmed that the lack of affordable housing should have been a priority for our federal government.

Similarly, testimony confirmed that the Conservatives also mismanaged the temporary foreign worker program, allowing employers to bring in temporary foreign workers with little to no monitoring for compliance with the rules of the program. The result has been that Canadian workers have lost out on jobs that should have been available to them, while temporary foreign workers face exploitation and rights violations.

If managed properly, the temporary foreign worker program should provide a temporary solution to a serious problem while emphasizing a longer-term response that promotes the best interests of Canadian workers and employers and our economy. The government has announced a review of the temporary foreign worker program, and New Democrats recommend that this review be conducted in a thorough and transparent manner, with a report tabled in the House of Commons as soon as the review is concluded.

Although this is another topic about which I could talk for hours, I will keep moving along.

Let us look next at the need for effective partnerships. In its skills strategy, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development suggests that all relevant stakeholders must be involved in order to ensure an effective, comprehensive approach to skills policies. Designing effective skills policies requires more than coordinating different sectors of public administration and aligning different levels of government: a broad range of non-governmental

actors, including employers, professional and industry associations, chambers of commerce, sector councils, trade unions, education and training institutions and individuals must all be involved.

New Democrats agree that policies are stronger when all relevant stakeholders are involved and consulted, and that is why we recommend that the development of policy options to improve labour market information to ensure a better match between the skills of graduates and the needs of employers and to develop strong curricula must always include all relevant stakeholders: federal, provincial, territorial and aboriginal governments, businesses and industry, employee representatives and labour unions, educational institutions and student associations as well as not-for-profit groups.

Speaking of students, my NDP colleagues and I respect that one of the major goals of post-secondary education is skills training. However, we also recognize that this is not the only goal for Canada's colleges and universities and that there is a role for pure research.

We also respect academic freedoms and the rights of scholars to freely choose their subject areas and research projects. Therefore, we recommend that consultations on curricula always be undertaken with appropriate respect for the multiple roles of post-secondary educational institutions.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not say a few words about the participation of aboriginal peoples in the labour market. Our committee heard some very compelling testimony in that regard. As the report notes, aboriginal peoples' labour market outcomes must be improved to ensure that aboriginal peoples benefit from resource development to reduce aboriginal poverty and to provide the skilled labour force that Canada will need in the future.

A key element of aboriginal labour market outcomes is education, yet the report offers no recommendations on aboriginal education at all. If educational outcomes are to improve for aboriginal students, they need adequately funded education that respects their unique culture and history in safe and healthy school facilities.

First nations education is the jurisdiction of the federal government, which does not provide equitable funding for first nations children.

● (1515)

While budget 2012 provided some new funds for first nations education, only eight new schools were built out of 170 needed, and so far, no money has been committed directly to first nations schools for front-line education services.

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According to the Assembly of First Nations, \$500 million is needed to bring funding for first nations K-12 education to parity with non-aboriginal Canadians. The AFN has also noted that a gap in funding for post-secondary education has prevented more than 13,000 first nations students from pursuing higher education. Those realities are completely unacceptable. That is why my NDP colleagues and I recommended that the government provide sufficient and equitable funding for first nations K-12 education as well as post-secondary education, including vocational training and apprenticeships, and that the government remove the punitive 2% cap on funding increases to first nations.

The Conservatives' failure to take consultations seriously has already derailed this process once, with the chiefs withdrawing from the process due to inadequate consultation. That is why we further recommended that the government recognize first nations' jurisdiction over education and abide by the federal government's duty to consult by holding extensive and meaningful consultations leading to the creation of a first nations education act that respects first nations' rights, culture and history.

The federal government also provides funding for Inuit education through territorial transfers and land claims agreements. The education system is seriously failing Inuit youth, with only 25% graduating from high school. Those who do manage to graduate are still not at the same skill level as non-aboriginal students.

The report of Thomas Berger, a conciliator appointed to resolve differences in the negotiations for the implementation of the land claims agreement, found that education was a key factor in impeding progress on Inuit representation in the public service. It called for an increase of \$20 million annually to education funding beyond what is provided through territorial financing.

The same holds true for other jobs. Inuit youth need culturally and linguistically appropriate education that enables them to stay in school and graduate with the skills they need to join the workforce. New Democrats therefore recommended that the government increase funding for Inuit education beyond the funding provided through territorial financing and land claims agreements.

Finally, the committee heard from multiple witnesses that the aboriginal skills and employment training strategy, ASETS, has been very successful in providing the training aboriginal Canadians need and the links with employers that help them find jobs after their training. However, the committee also heard that funding has been frozen since 1996, despite the fact that the need is greater than ever as the aboriginal population grows.

ASETS holders have also noted the heavy reporting burden that comes with their funding. A review of the program is beginning, and New Democrats recommend that the federal government include ASETS holders in the ongoing program review in a meaningful way and work with them to establish a process for stable, predictable and adequate funding to maintain and improve this highly successful program.

Let me try to sum up. To meet our labour force goals, we need more and better labour market data; incentives and/or requirements for employers to offer training programs; more support for workers seeking training; better EI programs; more affordable education

programs; enhanced support for labour mobility; the ability of immigrants here to have their credentials recognized and a much faster and more efficient process; and better support for an immigration program that does more than simply provide cheap foreign labour with no path to citizenship.

Overall, we need to see the skills shortage as one important issue among a series of important labour market issues, the most important of which remains the still very high unemployment rate. With 1.4 million Canadians out of work, it is hard to make the argument that we have a national labour shortage. What we have are regional shortages that cannot overshadow the fact that the Conservative government's most lasting failure is to develop and implement a strategy to create Canadian jobs. Until that happens, at best we will be tinkering at the margins.

• (1520)

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to address this concurrence motion on the report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, entitled "Labour and Skills Shortages in Canada: Addressing Current and Future Challenges".

This report is—

The Speaker: Is the hon. member getting up on a question?

Sorry, it was not clear. I wanted to make sure, because someone had started her speech.

The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, I know I do not usually have a podium like the Leader of the Opposition, but today I just felt I needed to have one. However, I greatly appreciate your looking out for me, sir. I guess I should be just a little more direct.

I appreciate the comment from the member opposite with respect to the recent report put forward by our committee. We heard throughout the committee's deliberations on the issue about skills mismatches and about absolute shortages in certain fields and certain sectors.

Maybe the member could comment on where she believes those absolute shortages are in the country and where we need to be focused with respect to those absolute shortages, which I could comment on. Maybe the member opposite could comment on where she sees those absolute shortages in the country and where we should be focusing our efforts.

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Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my comments, there were many areas in the study on skills shortages that we actually agreed upon, on all sides of the House. What the member wants is that I suggest that in some areas of the country there are skills shortages of such a nature that we absolutely have to bring in temporary foreign workers and that we have to be able to get access to cheap labour. Frankly, that is a recommendation with which I cannot agree, because until we actually provide decent wages for jobs and provide Canadians with the kind of skills training that enables them to fill the jobs in the areas where there are shortages, and until we provide incentives for labour mobility, temporary foreign workers should be the very last resort.

As members know, from following the debates in this House, is that whether at HD Mining or at RBC, what is happening now is that temporary foreign workers are coming into this country and are displacing Canadians and Canadian jobs. That is completely unacceptable, so we are calling on the government to help Canadians access those jobs. Again, it would do that by offering decent wages, by investing in a comprehensive skills training program and by supporting labour mobility initiatives, such as my Bill C-201, which I am very hopeful will come to the House soon. I look forward to the support of my colleagues on the government side of this House.

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in Quebec, the manpower vocational training commissions or CFPs became the SQDM, which became Emploi-Québec. In the 1990s, there was talk of a labour shortage. This is nothing new. It is a problem that the government should have dealt with a long time ago.

Now that they have recognized that there is a labour shortage, the Conservatives' reaction has been to lay responsibility for this situation on unemployed workers, reduce access to employment insurance, force Canadians to move to other parts of the country, and use the temporary foreign worker program to drive down wages.

What does the NDP propose we do to deal with this labour shortage?

• (1525)

[English]

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague not only for the question but for her incredible advocacy with respect to the employment insurance file. I do not think there is a more eloquent spokesperson in this country for the need to not only protect the existing EI system but to actually expand it so that those people who have paid into EI all of their working lives can access the benefits when they need them most.

As members know, EI is supposed to be a rainy day fund. People are paying into it as an insurance system, and on the day they lose their jobs, they are supposed to have access to those benefits to tide them over and give them the ability to look for their next job. This member, more than anybody else in this House, has fought on behalf of seasonal workers, particularly in Quebec and in the eastern parts of Canada, and on behalf of all working Canadians who need the EI system to be there for them when they need it most.

The member is absolutely right that we need to do much more to support Canadians to access work. We have a youth unemployment rate at twice the national average. Today's young Canadians belong to one of the most educated generations we have ever had in this country, yet they graduate and are unable to find employment. Why is that? It is because we are not providing them with the opportunities they need to access skills training and access the jobs that are available right across Canada. They need our support. We are able to fill labour shortages without resorting to the temporary foreign worker program.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to provide a brief comment about the temporary foreign worker program, which for the most part is an excellent program. However, because of the way the government has allowed that program to explode, at a great cost to many residents of Canada, it is generally felt that the government has gone overboard. We are not allowing residents of Canada to fill those job vacancies, which is critically important.

The temporary foreign worker program can be given a great deal of credit for a lot of success in certain industries from coast to coast to coast. We need to recognize that.

My question is related to the leadership role Ottawa should be playing in the different regions of our country. High school students who are graduating need to be in a better position to fill the many jobs that are, in fact, there. There needs to be more graduation of post-secondary students and the courses to meet labour demands into the future. There needs to be stronger federal leadership in working with the many different provincial training bodies, departments of education and so forth to ensure that our future labour force is better equipped to meet the demands of the economy.

Does the member want to provide comment as to what the federal government's role should be in that regard?

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, first let me comment on the little bit of revisionist history in the preamble to the question on the Conservative record on temporary foreign workers. I agree that the record has not been a stellar record. Again, I would reference RBC hiring temporary foreign workers and displacing Canadian jobs, HD Mining and others.

The reality is that the floodgates to temporary foreign workers were actually opened under the previous Liberal government. If we look at the record, since 2002, the record has been absolutely abysmal.

I think there is a role for the temporary foreign worker program, particularly with respect to some of the skilled professions, where we currently have a shortage. However, the reality is that we need to do our very best to make sure that young people have an opportunity to get those jobs, as the member suggested. That requires investments in post-secondary education, in apprenticeship programs and in skills training. We have to make sure that young Canadians have access to those programs in an affordable way.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first I want to acknowledge the work done by my colleague from Hamilton Mountain. She is stellar in the way she does her research. She comes prepared. She is stellar in her advocacy for her file and her constituents.

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We are in a state in which we have more temporary foreign workers being brought into the country than skilled workers. We have all kinds of concerns about the very high unemployment among our youth, yet the government still appears to be tinkering with the idea of investing in skills development in our youth today. In her research and at committee, what kind of suggestions were put forward to—

• (1530)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. I would just remind the hon. member that this is a question. Could she, first of all, address the Chair and, second, take the signal that her time is rapidly expiring? Could she quickly put the question?

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, my question to my hon. colleague is this. What does she think the government needs to do to address the serious issue of Canadians not being able to work for a living wage?

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, let me say to the member that our committee has also conducted a comprehensive study of apprenticeship programs and the need for serious investments in apprenticeships. It is something Canada has not taken very seriously in the past. We should follow the path of countries like Germany, which have invested in youth, in that country in particular, and have made sure that they have the skills their labour force needs, not just now but into the future. That is the kind of progressive planning Canada needs to do. It is a positive investment in our youth and is also a positive investment in our economy and in our future.

Ms. Kellie Leitch (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development and to the Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to address this concurrence motion, the report from the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, entitled “Labour and Skills Shortages in Canada: Addressing Current and Future Challenges”.

The report is in perfect harmony with our government's policies on skill shortages. This is something that I have heard a significant amount about in doing cross-country consultations with regard to the Canada jobs grant. We also even heard about some of that this morning in committee.

Since 2006, the government's top priority has been jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. We have good reason to be proud of our performance in this area. The numbers speak for themselves.

Since the worst downturn of the recession, over 900,000 net new jobs have been created, mostly private sector and full time. In fact 90% of them have been in the private sector and full time, with over two-thirds in high-wage industries.

Canada's economy has done well, but it still can do better. There are currently thousands of jobs available across the country that continue to go unfilled and too many Canadians are still looking for work. This has serious consequences for our country's economy and for Canadians' standard of living.

For example, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce in its top 10 barriers to competitiveness has once again identified skill shortages. As opposed to what the opposition likes to say, skill shortages is one of the number one obstacles to success of its members. Meanwhile

we have segments of the population that are unemployed or underemployed and that would be available to fill those jobs.

Something is wrong when we have so many Canadians sitting on the sidelines, looking for ways to enter the job market at a time when employers say that they have unfilled positions. Demand is particularly great for career fields, like science, technology, engineering, mathematics and many of the skilled trades, which require exactly those same skills in math and sciences. These shortages will only become more acute over the coming years as we see more and more baby boomers retire.

Canada's economic action plan 2013 has a three-point plan to ensure that skills training is aligned with the needs of the job market, something that the opposition members state they are voting against.

First, we are introducing the Canada jobs grant to get employers directly involved in skills training decisions so they know exactly where there is a job so we can skill someone for that job, something I heard about from employers and employees all across the country last week when I was running round table consultations.

Second, the plan will create more opportunities for apprentices, something we have heard about at our committee.

Finally, it will provide support to groups that are under-represented in the job market.

Let me focus a little more on the range of measures we have announced in economic action plan 2013.

Given Canada's demographic trends and especially our aging population, skills and labour shortages will only get worse until we find a way to use the country's untapped talent. I am talking about capitalizing on the potential of groups that tend to have the highest rates of unemployment, such as Canada's young people and individuals with disabilities.

Many young people are graduating into unemployment or underemployment and that is because of a lack of skills that employers are actually seeking. There is a mismatch. Young people start to make career and education decisions as early as grade seven. By the time they finish high school, they have already formed their ideas of what is or is not actually the career for themselves. We need to help them get better information at an earlier age.

We need to help them understand where the jobs really are in Canada and where they are not, something we spoke about during the course of this committee's discussion on this exact report. These echo what the committee heard from those who were interviewed.

We know on-the-job experience is just as important as training and our apprenticeship programs are working well.

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However, there is room for improvement, particularly when it comes to better credential recognition. That is why we are working to put forward, with our province and territorial partners, an ability to harmonize requirements for apprentices.

We are also going to examine the use of practical tests for methods of assessment. We will promote the use of apprentices in federal contract work, for things such as construction and maintenance of affordable housing and infrastructure projects, something that was specifically asked of us at committee.

Economic action plan 2013 will invest significant funds over two years to give Canadians access to better labour market information, exactly what I was mentioning before, providing young people in particular the opportunity to know what is available and where and where it is not and develop new outreach efforts to promote careers in high-demand fields, where jobs are available for them to fill.

For example, our young people need to become better informed about career opportunities in the skilled trades and how good wages actually exist. Having grown up in Fort McMurray, Alberta, I know that many of the individuals there, who are skilled trades individuals, have an acute idea of exactly what a good wage is and they are doing particularly well, whether that is working for a large firm or a small firm or moving on to create their own firm as an entrepreneur.

• (1535)

Skilled trades are an excellent opportunity for young people and it is not just apprentices who would benefit from this budget. There is another 5,000 paid internships that will be made available over three years for recent post-secondary graduates, ensuring they have on-the-job training that not only employers but employees have talked to us about so they can make the transition into the workplace.

Our economy needs the skills, talents and amazing spirit of our young people, but we also need the skills, talents and amazing spirit of Canadians with disabilities. Any vision of future growth and prosperity in Canada would be incomplete without considering the contribution that people with disabilities can make.

I would like to remind the House that economic action plan 2012 announced the creation of the Panel on Labour Market Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities. Its mandate was to identify private-sector successes and best practices and increasing the labour market participation of persons with disabilities. In its January 2013 report entitled, "Rethinking Disabilities in the Private Sector", the panel estimates roughly 800,000 working-age Canadians who have a disability are unemployed. Imagine how they could help address the skills shortages that employers have across the country.

The panel argues that there is a good business case for hiring individuals with disabilities and the report sets out practical steps that can be taken to recruit individuals with disabilities and support them in the workplace. The panel found that many workplace accommodations required for employees with disabilities cost little to nothing and organizations that already employed persons with disabilities reported they have significant benefits, both in terms of company culture and their bottom line. From personal experience, working in clinics and talking to the parents of young adolescents who have cerebral palsy or talking with patients who have

disabilities, these are exactly the things we need to be doing moving forward.

Our government is doing its part to get more people with disabilities into the workforce. Budget 2013 announced significant investments for a new generation of labour market agreements for persons with disabilities. The reformed agreements to be introduced in 2014 would better meet the needs of Canadian businesses and improve the employment prospects for individuals with disabilities.

Budget 2013 also proposes ongoing funding for the opportunities fund to provide more demand-driven training solutions for persons with disabilities. Budget 2013 would make permanent the annual funding for the enabling accessibility fund to support capital costs of construction and renovations to improve physical accessibility.

Economic action plan 2013 also proposed the creation of a Canadian employers disability forum to be managed by employers for employers. This forum will facilitate education training, the sharing of resources and best practices with regard to the employment of individuals with disabilities, something that I would encourage all members of the House to inform their businesses about and to become active in.

When I was British Columbia last Friday, a number of employers stated they had not necessarily heard what the great results were of this report. I encourage as many business leaders as possible across the country to look up this report and read the recommendations. If they have questions, they should approach individuals who can give them some direction on education and what we can do in order to aid individuals with disabilities entering into the workforce.

The budget provides enhanced funding for the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, some of which will support research on labour market participation of Canadians with disabilities entering into the workforce.

Lastly, I will comment on the cross-country consultations that the Government of Canada is doing with respect to the Canada jobs grant and temporary foreign workers. Having been in Regina, Calgary and Vancouver last week and later this week in St. John's and Halifax and other places in the country in the near future, we are listening to Canadians because we need their input and are asking for their input on how to ensure these are the most effective programs and skills training programs for Canadian businesses, employers and employees. We want to ensure we are linking Canadians to available jobs, those that are in demand, and that they have the information available to them so they can make great decisions with respect to their future career opportunities.

I appreciate the time to speak to this concurrence motion. The skills and training initiatives in economic action plan 2013 will enable more Canadians to contribute to the economy and share in our growth and prosperity across the country. Therefore, we are happy to concur with the report from the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

Routine Proceedings

● (1540)

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I welcome this report, but I have to admit that I am extremely puzzled. I look forward to the hon. member informing me on whether this incredible program, the Environment Sector Council, now called ECO Canada, which may no longer be funded by the federal government, will be remaining.

I had the honour of sitting on that board for seven years. It does labour market work on environmental employment. For more than a decade, it has shown that environmental employment is the highest growing rate of employment in the country. In this report, we see recommendations for informing Canadians about these potential jobs, with a section specifically on getting aboriginals into environmental employment and another for immigrants. It also provides for apprenticeships and matching up students with jobs for the summer.

Could the hon. member inform the House whether the Conservatives intend to continue financing the labour market reviews by ECO Canada and if they in fact intend to use that as a model for all the other agencies and government.

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned in my speech, we are providing significant funding in economic action plan 2013 with regard to labour market information, in fact \$19 million over two years to ensure that Canadians are best informed of where there are in-demand jobs.

I think the member opposite knows that there has been a sunset of the sector councils. We do have an opportunity for them to apply for funding. If this organization is as excellent as the member states, and I am sure it is, then I encourage it to participate actively in that process.

We have been very clear. There are a number of in-demand jobs available and we want to best link young Canadians, individuals with disabilities and individuals looking for jobs with those opportunities. We have provided substantive funding in the budget to do just that.

The opposition, though, has already stated it is voting against that.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting listening to the parliamentary secretary trying to give the impression to Canadians that this is a progressive government trying to get our young people and others the skill sets in order to meet the jobs of tomorrow. In fact, there has probably been more effort by the Conservative government than any other government prior in promoting itself.

In the local ridings, we spend roughly \$300,000 on the summer employment program. These summer employment programs go a long way in not only filling jobs while students attend university, but also in developing the skill sets they have so they can actually get into full-time jobs after they graduate.

Would the member try to justify to Canadians how her government feels it necessary to limit the amount of real summer employment for youth, while at the same time spending literally tens of thousands, \$90,000 plus, on one ad during the NHL playoffs.

● (1545)

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, this government has actually been very focused on ensuring young Canadians have opportunities for jobs. That is why we put forward the youth employment strategy, a \$300 million program, which was augmented in last year's budget, as well as another 5,000 paid internships, as I mentioned in my speech. The member opposite may not have heard that. There are also a number of other items that employers and employees have spoken to me about, whether that be the Canada jobs grants, for which any Canadian will be able to apply. These are great opportunities for Canadians.

If the member opposite would like to talk about government spending, the Liberals cornered the market on that before 2006 when we were elected. I encourage him to think again about those numbers. I do not think he wants to get into that debate.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I would like to follow up on my previous question for the hon. member.

She mentioned there was great respect for the sector councils, and I am looking quickly through the list of witnesses. Did it not occur to the government that they would be very good witnesses to come in since they used to do labour market analyses, particularly ECO Canada?

I am absolutely stunned that the Conservatives would kill the sector council. It was an organization that brought together people working in the sector, non-profit people, students and so forth. Could she speak to why on earth, at a time when the very recommendations they are making to initiate labour market studies, they have killed the very entity that did them so effectively for a decade?

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, as the member opposite knows, this is actually a committee of the House of Commons, not of the government. At our committee we have a very fair and open process. Any individuals whose names are put forward to come to committee, we actually accommodate everyone.

I would encourage the member in the future, if she would like to have someone come forward, to please speak to the members who are on our committee because we would be delighted to hear from them. Their names were never put forward, but I can say that we listened to people from all over the country. They gave great testimony and we were able to put forward this great report that all members invested a significant amount of time in.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her speech. It caught my attention and raised some questions for me.

I received a letter from Joyce Reynolds of the Canadian Restaurant and Foodservices Association. It indicates that the 15 to 24 age group has reached a demographic peak, which is contributing to the labour shortage. She says that the restaurant and food service sectors will need 1,225,200 employees between now and 2015 and that 35,000 of these positions will not be filled.

Routine Proceedings

The parliamentary secretary has said that the Conservatives are going to encourage the hiring of young people to fill those positions, yet this age group has clearly already reached its demographic peak. Where will they get the workers to fill these positions?

[English]

Ms. Kellie Leitch: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, we have an untapped wealth of 800,000 Canadians with disabilities who can fill a number of different roles, let alone a number of young people across the country seeking their first opportunity for employment. We want to provide hands-on, on-the-job training experience to as many young Canadians as is absolutely possible. That is why we have moved forward with the youth employment strategy.

I appreciate the question from the member opposite. I encourage her, just as I have all members in the House, to actually make sure that employers in her riding are well educated about the report from the panel on labour market issues regarding persons with disabilities, because she can better integrate those Canadians into her workplace.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to share with the House that I will be splitting my time with my good friend and colleague from Winnipeg North. I want to thank my colleague from Hamilton Mountain for bringing this forward at this time this afternoon to speak to this very important issue.

Before we get into the meat of the issue, I will just take two minutes up front here and maybe vent a little frustration that is on the minds of many Canadians currently, especially those who follow the NHL playoffs. It sort of ties in with the whole thing about job creation and what the government is doing, but also what it is not doing with regard to job creation and opportunities to fill some of the skills shortages that are in this country. It is neglecting some of the areas where we are seeing mass out-migration and hurting rural and remote communities.

The one that really has Canadians rankled is that the Conservatives continue to waste money. They did it every night of the NHL playoffs, and of course during the Juno Awards and the Super Bowl, with the action plan advertisements. We know that it costs \$32,000 a minute for these particular ads. We know the number of summer students that could support, that every time we see an ad that is 32 summer students who could probably be supported through this money. Often, these are young people's first opportunities to get into the workforce, to garner and develop those work skills and those good work habits. Then they could go further and continue their education and become strong and productive citizens. That is what we all want here. However, there is this perverse attempt by the Conservatives to paint themselves as a caring party when we know that they are squandering important, precious money on these particular advertising programs.

The latest one is the job grants. If it was not bad enough before with the action plan ads, in the job grants ads the Conservatives are actually advertising for a program that is not even set up yet. They have not spoken to the provinces yet. It is supposed to be coming in 2015 and they have not even had consultations with the provinces and they are advertising this program. It is unbelievable. It would be like me going to my wife and saying, "Honey, if you want to congratulate me now I just finished the Cabot Trail relay road race. I

haven't bought my pair of runners yet, I haven't gone for a jog in six years but I'm going to finish it next year and this is my advertisement here." It is unbelievable.

That money that the Conservatives are wasting is on a program that might or might not happen, and they have bailed out of training. Let us pick a number, say \$200 million, that would have gone to the Province of New Brunswick to help with training in the labour market development agreement. Now the Conservatives are saying that they will come in with a third of the dollars if New Brunswick will come in with a third, and then the private sector will come in with a third. So if the Province of New Brunswick, which is running a significant deficit under its Conservative provincial government, cannot afford to match that \$200 million, we know those federal dollars will not be going into those training opportunities for the young people in New Brunswick for them to pursue an education or apprenticeship and develop some kind of skill to be productive citizens. However, now they have the advertising. Therefore, I am with the lion's share of Canadians who are really upset with this thing.

● (1550)

There is a proviso at the bottom that this is subject to parliamentary approval. It has more disclaimers than a Viagra commercial. My suggestion is that they pull out of this program.

That is enough ranting about the waste we are seeing. I want to talk about support for apprentices and where the Conservatives have fallen short. Regarding the inaction, suggestions have come forward. Testimony has been presented by very credible witnesses, people who are impacted by the changes the government has made over the last number of months. For example, on the apprenticeship program we had testimony just recently from Polytechnics Canada. Witnesses pointed out during committee meetings that the level of financial support provided through the system is just simply inadequate.

We asked a number of apprentices about their level of support because if people take a trade, when they go to school they are supported by employment insurance. They talked about the attrition rate for young apprentices. People are older when they start apprenticeship programs. Maybe they take a job and get some life experience and then move to the trades when they are about 27 or 28 years old, on average. By that time, some may have a family. Certainly they have bills, if they are coming out of the workforce and are trying to upgrade into a trade. That is a reality.

When they go to school, typically they make application for employment insurance and there is a two-week waiting period. Because the Conservative government has gutted EI processing centres, cut 600 jobs in the EI processing centres, the backlog of EI claims now just goes on and on. In 2004, 80% of the time first-time claims were being turned around in 21 days. At that time we thought that was a long time for a person to go without any household income. Now, and what we heard from witnesses, that is taking 28 days. That is the new target. Conservatives have extended the target, so they have a better chance of hitting the target if they make the target a little broader, but they are only hitting that 30% of the time.

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We are seeing young apprentices having to go five, six or seven weeks without any income. If they do not have family support, if they do not have someone helping them out by putting food in the fridge and paying their bills, then they are dropping out of the courses and are letting the apprenticeships go. We have testimony to that effect. There is no sign of that in the report. We are not seeing the testimony line up with the recommendations as presented.

The government heralds how well it is doing with apprenticeship grants. Through the department's own findings in 2009, it published in the apprenticeship grant review that almost all apprentices who completed their apprenticeship would have done so without the grants. I question what impact this is having on skills development and addressing the problem of skills shortages. There are many other initiatives. Certainly we have put those initiatives forward in the minority report. I would hope that the government would seriously consider and try to move on these.

• (1555)

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I loved the member's presentation. It did not make any sense, but I loved it.

This concurrence motion is a discussion of a report on skills shortages in Canada. This government, through the economic action plan, has put forward a number of opportunities, through skills development for aboriginals, for those with disabilities, for students who need employment. I heard that the opposition has some other ideas in the minority report.

Are there things we are doing that members of the Liberal Party approve of that they would like to see happen and are they going to support us in moving forward on the area of work in terms of skills development, or are they opposed because they did not come up with the idea?

• (1600)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, the member said he did not understand most of it. I was talking about actual situations that have taken place in households across Canada. The Conservatives are that far removed from the reality that it would be so foreign to them. They just do not understand it. They cannot relate.

There is a firewall between reality and the current government, and the Conservatives just cannot relate.

This is something that would never happen from the PMO talking points, but as a matter of fact, the labour market information aspect of the recommendations is not all that bad, so I will give the member that.

The fact is that it has been four years since the federal government received the working together to build a better labour market information system, which is all about labour market information, put together by Donald Drummond, and the Conservatives have done nothing with it. They have not moved on one of the recommendations.

The chance of the Conservatives moving on some of the recommendations we put forward in the minority report are probably about as good as the Leafs—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the committee repeatedly heard evidence and was provided information about the job market. We heard that there will be a labour shortage—something we have known since the 1990s—and that we do not have sufficient data about businesses, employers or the population. Furthermore, the data is not released often enough, nor are high-quality forecasts.

My question is about future shortages. We need more workers in the labour market. Does the member know whether this government has made plans to fill that labour shortage? What does his party suggest?

[*English*]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner: Mr. Speaker, what the member shared with the House about the lack of information is absolutely true. Certainly reducing the funding to the sector councils would have an adverse effect going forward, in recognizing opportunities within the workforce, what industries would require and what types of work they would need. The defunding of the sector councils was a huge step back for workforce development.

Does the government have a plan? We saw the plan the Conservatives had for temporary foreign workers. A year ago they introduced the 15% decrease, the accelerated labour market opinions. They introduced that last year and now, 12 months later, they flip on that and pull that stuff away.

The Conservatives have managed to have everybody wondering what the heck is next. Business and the workforce are guessing about what will happen next, because there is no plan and no strategy. In the absence of that, we have chaos.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, perhaps I could pick up on my colleague's comments about the lack of a plan. There is a significant difference between this particular government and the Liberal Party. The government has demonstrated a willingness to act, to a certain degree, but in a very piecemeal way. It will take on a little section and then talk about how much it is investing and how it will be to the betterment of Canadians. What we really need to do is take a holistic approach dealing with our skills and the types of employment opportunities out there.

What we have witnessed with the government are serious cutbacks and neglect in dealing with the skills shortages Canada has, not only for today, but also for tomorrow. We need a government—ideally a Liberal government, I would suggest—that is going to take a more holistic approach to dealing with what is a very serious issue that all Canadians are trying to better appreciate. They want to see a government being more aggressive in dealing with the skills shortage and labour needs going forward.

Canadians are concerned about unemployment. It is very real. Look at our youth unemployment numbers. They are some of the highest we have ever seen. The government is actually seeing net decreases in youth employment opportunities going forward. Of course we are going to be concerned about that.

Routine Proceedings

What about the middle class, the individual who is 45 to 55 years of age, who now finds himself unemployed? Maybe he was working in the manufacturing industry in Ontario or Manitoba or any other place in Canada. He was receiving a relatively decent wage and now finds himself unemployed because of the structuring that is taking place worldwide and the impact, in part, it has had on Canada. Where is that caring, compassionate government that is going to stand up for the middle class, the working class, someone who has been deemed unemployed because of a factory having been shut down? The government has not ponied up. It has not been at the table. We do not see a government working with the many different stakeholders in our community.

My colleague made reference to the jobs grant. The government is spending taxpayers' dollars on promoting the jobs grant, yet it has not done its homework on it. It has not had the necessary meetings with the many different stakeholders to try to develop a program that will be effective. This is something in which the government has been very much lacking.

It was not that long ago that I was standing up and using the example of youth and summer employment job opportunities. We are seeing fewer youth being employed today than we have seen under previous administrations. Quite often it is those summer jobs that provide the skills and opportunities that assist young people upon completion of their post-secondary education in landing their first job. Instead, we have seen the government cut back on that.

At the same time, the Minister of Finance and the government have spent astronomical amounts of tax dollars. They are using tax dollars to promote things like the action plan, which many, including me, would argue is a dud. Tax dollars are being spent on commercials. As my colleague mentioned, it costs \$90,000 for a 30-second ad during NHL playoffs, and it is getting to be more of an expense.

These are Canadian tax dollars being used for something that is just not necessary, while on the other hand, every community across Canada could benefit from the tax dollars being spent on youth summer jobs. Those jobs will go much further in terms of advancing skills for young people.

• (1605)

However, I believe we need to do a lot more. We need to take a holistic approach. This is where, I would argue, Liberals differ from New Democrats. The previous member who spoke got a little upset with the temporary foreign worker program. There is some reason to be upset with the temporary foreign worker program. Let us recognize that the program has done wonders for our country. It has improved the standard of living for every Canadian and resident in Canada. If it is done properly and managed in the way it was intended to be managed, it is not going to displace one resident or Canadian in this country from a job. It should be building our economy. There are certain industries in Canada today that would not be here if it were not for the temporary foreign worker program.

Unlike the NDP, Liberals see the merits of the program and believe the program has great value, but we also understand that abuse has been taking place and the government has allowed it to take place. The government has failed to recognize how important it is to have the skill set training programs in place to ensure that we

are better able to fill the labour market, whether it is today or into the future. The government has not been successful in doing that and, in good part, has been relying on the temporary foreign worker program to fill that gap.

There are many different ways in which the Government of Canada could be demonstrating leadership in ensuring that valued jobs, which are important jobs and could potentially continue to grow our economy, are being filled by Canadians and residents of Canada. One of the most important things it can do is work with different stakeholders. The government has not been known to sit down with stakeholders in provinces and cities to come up with good, sound public policy, but if it genuinely cares about creating jobs and wants Canadians to be employed, it needs to give more attention to this file. That means picking up the telephone and, beyond that, meeting with ministers and trying to line up different types of programs that are being made available, recognizing it has a role to play in that.

Far too often I meet with high school students who say they hear about jobs and then ask to what degree they are actually being provided the opportunity to acquire those jobs or to what degree community colleges or universities are working with the private sector and different levels of government to ensure that future jobs are in fact being taken into consideration when the curriculum is being developed. Many would argue that is long term and, yes, it is long term, but there are also short-term things the government can be doing, such as working with stakeholders and providing incentives through the use of tax dollars to ensure there are first-class training opportunities for people who call Canada home, whether they are Canadian citizens or landed immigrants.

We have people who are prepared to do the work. They are looking for strong leadership from the government and other sectors to come to the table to make sure those jobs are in fact going to people who call Canada home.

• (1610)

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the comments of the hon. member opposite, and I must say I agree with him entirely that infrastructure in Canada needs more support, that the municipalities need more support on infrastructure, that we need a much more effective jobs training program and that our manufacturers need assistance.

Since we are doing all of these things, and in fact they are major points of the economic action plan 2013, I ask the member opposite whether will he vote his conscience in support of the budget bill.

• (1615)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, first, I compliment the Minister of Finance for listening to what I have to say.

I think it is important that he recognize that there needs to be leadership from the Prime Minister's Office in dealing with the important issues facing our country today.

Routine Proceedings

If the Prime Minister truly believes in doing things for our working class and our middle class and wants to create more jobs, why has he never met once with the premiers as a collective group? Why does he not look at how we can start working together? Canadians expect the Prime Minister and the Minister of Finance to be working in co-operation.

I recognize, as the Liberal Party of Canada recognizes, how critically important it is that we keep our economy moving forward and put emphasis on job creation, on infrastructure and so forth, but we also believe it is critically important that we work in co-operation with the many different stakeholders, including the different levels of government, because if we are successful at doing that, we will create more jobs and more skill sets for Canadians.

To date the government has been doing it in a very piecemeal fashion. It means that some will be created, but nowhere to the degree that Canada has the potential to create if in fact we were prepared to show—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Questions and comments. The hon. member for Richmond—Arthabaska.

[*Translation*]

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the member just spoke about the lack of co-operation between the federal government and provincial governments, especially the Government of Quebec, and the famous 30-second \$95,000 ads about a job training program that does not even exist, which are being run during the current playoffs.

There is a disconnect between reality and the government's line that it is willing to work with the provinces and Quebec in order to put programs in place. We have come to the conclusion that the federal government is interfering once again in Quebec's areas of jurisdiction, because labour training is the responsibility of Quebec and the provinces.

How is it logical for the government to claim that it is putting in place a program even though Quebec does not want it? Quebec wants support and it wants the funding that goes with the program, which is paid for by our taxes, but it does not want the federal government to impose conditions on job training, which is a provincial area of jurisdiction.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, whether it is the Province of Quebec or the Province of Manitoba or any province in Canada, we have to respect and work with provincial entities if we want to achieve maximum employment and maximum skill set development.

There is a strong role for the federal government to demonstrate leadership on that file. It is equally important that we also recognize the many different institutions that develop those skill sets and the stakeholders that use those skill sets.

What we really need to do is recognize that we have to put Canadians first and foremost as the highest priority. If we do that and acknowledge it as the highest priority, then it behooves all levels of government to start working more closely together.

In terms of the reference to the jobs grant, much like the action plan, I think the amount of money that we spend to promote the

action plan or the jobs bank is insulting. In this case it does not even exist yet. It is just so the government can pat itself on the back.

Let us deal with real—

• (1620)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. Resuming debate, the hon. member for Calgary Northeast.

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in favour of the motion and the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities entitled “Labour and Skills Shortages in Canada: Addressing Current and Future Challenges”.

The report acknowledges that the issue of labour and skills shortages is very complex and requires coordinated action on a number of fronts.

I would like to take this opportunity to highlight what the Government of Canada is doing to close the skills gap. I would also like to address some of the opportunities our partners in the private sector have to be part of the solution.

Now is a critical time for Canada's economic recovery. While markets are fragile because of global uncertainty, Canada is still on the path toward economic growth and prosperity, but this growth can only be sustained if we have a skilled and knowledgeable workforce, which means that our workers must be equipped with the basic skills required to drive the economy. These skills are building blocks recognized in our government's budget, economic action plan 2013.

The economic action plan proposes new measures to connect Canadians with available jobs and to provide them with the skills and training they need to thrive in today's economy. These measures include introducing the new Canada job grant, creating more opportunities for apprentices and providing employment support to underrepresented groups, such as people with disabilities, youth, aboriginal people and newcomers.

While significant money is spent on training, it is clear we can do better. There are still too many unemployed Canadians looking for jobs and too many businesses looking for workers.

I would like to focus on the Canada job grant, which seeks to connect Canadians looking to increase their skills with job creators who need skilled workers.

Mr. Speaker, I forgot to mention that I will be splitting my time with my colleague.

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For example, a small dental practice in London, Ontario, might be seeking a new dental assistant. The current receptionist is interested in the position but is not qualified. The dentist is keen to retain this worker in her practice and contributes \$2,500 toward a \$7,500 Canada job grant. That also results in equal contributions of \$2,500 from the federal and provincial governments to allow the receptionist to complete the dental assistant course at the local community college. The original receptionist works with the dentist to hire and train a new receptionist. Now working as a new dental assistant, the employee's wage has increased 25%. That dentist has managed to retain a committed and loyal employee and also has the additional flexibility to manage periodic employee absences by having an employee trained in several areas of the practice.

As members can see from the example, for the first time the Canada job grant is taking skills training choices out of the hands of the government and putting them where they belong: in the hands of job creators and Canadians looking for work.

Given the magnitude of the problem, we must ask all players, including employers and post-secondary institutions, to step up to the plate to address this very serious issue. This is especially true for Canadian companies that want their businesses to grow.

According to a survey conducted by the Conference Board of Canada, the average amount companies spent for employees on training and development in 2011 was \$747. Companies allocated 1.5% of their payroll budget to training, down from 2% in the 1990s. As well, 51% of organizations plan to cut spending on training, and 33% of Canadian employees said they wanted to further their skills but did not.

• (1625)

Now that the recovery is starting to get a foothold, we believe companies should invest more aggressively in their employees' skills and in their future.

What we are saying is that our future balance sheets could be much better if we invested in the skills needed to propel our economy, and this is the central point in the report: that a concerted effort is required by everyone to tackle this important issue.

Ensuring that Canadians have the skills required for the jobs of today and tomorrow is critical to achieving our top priorities of job creation, economic growth and long-term prosperity for Canadians. A shortage of workers with the right skills can mean forgone business opportunities for Canadian enterprises, lost productivity for Canada, and lower living standards and fewer employment opportunities for Canadians.

Let me quote a few experts on the skills shortage facing Canadians.

In August 2012, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business said that a shortage of skilled labour is the main operating challenge facing business owners in Newfoundland.

Susan Holt, the New Brunswick Business Council CEO, said on February 24, 2012:

There are more shortages in the higher-skilled positions but we still have 30 per cent of respondents highlighting challenges in filling low-skilled positions.

Perrin Beatty, the president and CEO of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, said on February 8, 2012:

...what I'm hearing from businesses is they cannot get their hands on the people they need to allow them to expand and be more competitive.

As committee members heard as they travelled to all regions in Canada, the skills gap is real and it is holding back our economy from fully developing. We want to ensure every Canadian can find a place in the job market, because Canadian employers need every last one of them.

Highlighting youth, economic action plan 2013 proposes several strategic investments to help them at different stages of their education and careers.

For example, to make maximum use of education and talent of recent graduates, we will invest through the career focus program to support 5,000 more paid internships for recent post-secondary graduates and we will also improve labour market information for young people considering careers in high-demand fields such as the skilled trades, science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

These youth-focused initiatives are accompanied by supports for persons with disabilities, aboriginal people and newcomers that will help meet the employment needs of Canadian businesses and improve individuals' job prospects.

With initiatives such as the Canada job grant, we are addressing the real needs of workers and employers.

By working collaboratively, employers, industry, educational institutions and governments can ensure that our workforce can keep Canada competitive and prosperous for the long term.

This is why we are pleased to provide our support to concur in this report.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I followed the member's speech with great interest. We serve on the committee together, so I know his perspective on many of these issues quite well.

I want to ask him specifically, though, about the part of his speech in which he talked at length about the Canada job grant. He talked about it in much the same way that the TV ads do. He lauded it as a great program, as the next best thing for Canadians who are looking to upgrade their skills, yet the program does not actually exist.

What we know about the job grant is that there is an ad campaign running in the middle of NHL hockey games, I think to the tune of \$90,000 per ad, about a program that advertises the Canada job grant, which does not exist.

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I wonder if the member, because he talked about it in his speech, knows more about it than the rest of us in this House do. If he does, I wonder whether he would share those details with the rest of us.

I would ask him quite directly here, since he raised it, to give members of this House the details of the Canada job grant and how it would help people in my community of Hamilton Mountain and, indeed, people right across this country.

• (1630)

Mr. Devinder Shory: Mr. Speaker, I honestly love this question. I do not know where the member lives, but I can tell her one thing: this program is introduced in the budget. I myself have already started consultations.

I will quote what I heard from the United Way president and CEO, Dr. Lucy Miller, and its vice-president and chief operating officer, Heather MacDonald. They said that the government's focus on skills training is in line with the United Way's project called All In. At Bishop McNally High School they started to invite high school dropouts back to school and were encouraging students in higher learning such as skilled trades and colleges.

I would encourage the member opposite to start consulting her constituents.

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to talk about the Canada jobs grant as well. I wonder if the member could explain to the House why this is so important. Could he explain why we should be dealing not only government to government but also government to business? We all know how important the economy is and how much value we place on a skilled, trained workforce. I am wondering if the hon. member could talk a bit about why it is so important that businesses be incorporated into this model as well.

Mr. Devinder Shory: Mr. Speaker, too many jobs go unfilled in Canada because employers cannot find workers with the right skills. As I mentioned, there are always good results when it is a partnership and also when all stakeholders are involved. It is important to work with employers with a vested interest in keeping their employees for the long term and having their skills updated. It is important for all stakeholders to get involved and invest in the skills they require.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to repeat the question raised by my colleague in the House. I wonder if the member could tell us the details about what exactly the skills program is doing rather than just giving us accolades from some people about a program they might know about but the House does not yet know about.

Mr. Devinder Shory: Mr. Speaker, I guess I have to repeat my answer because the hon. member seems to have missed the point. This program was introduced in Canada's action plan 2013. Consultation is going on and stakeholders are taking note of it. I can assure the member opposite that the stakeholders I have been consulting with are encouraged to see this kind of program and they do appreciate it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, Airport Security.

Resuming debate. The hon. Minister of Labour.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Labour, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by commending the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities for examining the issue of skills and labour shortages in Canada. We cannot speak of skills and labour shortages in Canada without mentioning how strongly the future is linked to the economic development of the resources in our country, especially since these resources are so abundant in so many regions.

I have consulted widely with employers and unions across the country with respect to challenges being faced in the workplace. What has come back very clearly to me from both sides is that labour and skills shortages are a major concern of both management and unions. That is why the key focus of our economic action plan 2013 is on skills training and development. It is not just on skills development in general, but on skills and development training that are going to meet specific labour market demands for all Canadians.

Our Conservative government recognizes that we have more to do to maximize participation by Canadians in the market, with initiatives that connect more people to the jobs that are available now and in the future. That is where we have been focusing in recent years.

We know that to improve Canada's long-term economic outlook, we need to get more of Canada's underutilized workers and their skills to work. We have been improving the employment insurance program so we can ensure that Canadians have a better connection with the jobs available. We are also working to better connect the EI system to the temporary foreign worker program to ensure that we always put Canadian workers first. That is why economic action plan 2013 would invest significantly in skills and training; to ensure that all Canadian workers have the skills they need to play an active part in the labour market and, ultimately, contribute to our country's economic growth.

Economic action plan 2013 puts forward a three-point plan to connect Canadians with jobs available. Most notably, and this is what we have been speaking about in the House today, is the new Canada jobs grant. It is a very exciting program, because it will potentially provide hundreds of thousands of Canadians each year with \$15,000 or more to retrain; \$5,000 of this will come from the federal government. The provinces and territories and employers will be expected to match that contribution.

At the time of introducing the economic action plan, the Minister of Finance said:

The Canada Job Grant will take skills-training choices out of the hands of government and put them where they belong: in the hands of employers [...] and Canadians who want to work.

More importantly, the new grant should lead to one essential thing for unemployed or underemployed Canadians: a job.

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That is not all. The economic action plan committed to creating more opportunities for apprentices as well. To help reduce barriers to accreditation, we are going to invest \$4 million over three years to work with the provinces and the territories to harmonize requirements and examine the use of practical tests as a method of assessment.

We are also going to reform procurement practices. This is very important, because we are going to encourage contractors to hire apprentices on federal construction and maintenance projects. We are going to work with the provinces and territories to ensure that they, too, support the employment of apprentices.

Our third focus in economic action plan 2013 would improve support to groups that are currently under-represented in the job market. These are youth, Canadians with disabilities, aboriginal people and newcomers to Canada. We want to ensure that every Canadian can find a place in the job market because, quite frankly, Canadian employers need every last one of them.

To highlight youth, economic action plan 2013 proposes several strategic investments to help the youth at different stages of their education and, of course, their careers.

● (1635)

To give an example, to make maximum use of the education and talents of graduates, we are going to invest significant funding through the career focus program to support more than 5,000 paid internships for recent post-secondary graduates. We will also reallocate money over two years to improve labour market information for young people considering careers in those high demand fields, such as the skilled trades, science, technology, engineering and mathematics. These youth-focused initiatives would be accompanied by supports for persons with disabilities, aboriginal people, and of course, for newcomers to help meet the employment needs of Canadian businesses and improve individuals' job prospects along the way.

As anyone with young people knows, young workers entering the workforce face an uncertain job market, while at the same time, some industries in certain sectors face labour shortages that young Canadians could fill. The youth employment strategy, whose budget has been significantly increased over the past few years, is helping youth develop the skills and gain the experience they need to get jobs now and prepare for the workforce of tomorrow. Since 2006, our efforts have helped over 2.1 million young people get skills, training and jobs in the Canadian labour market.

We are also helping young people, and especially students from low-income and middle-income families, by making post-secondary education and training more accessible.

A mix of supports is available to help Canadians save for, finance and repay their post-secondary education. Measures include the Canada learning bond, Canada education savings grant, Canada student grants, Canada student loans and the repayment assistance plan.

The best programs to develop young people's skills and ensure they are adapted to the needs of employers are those that are offered in workplaces. That is especially true in the case of the skilled trades. That is why our government created the apprenticeship grants, which

match skills with the jobs available. The apprenticeship incentive grant provides up to \$2,000 in grants for an apprentice in a red seal trade who completes the first or second level of their apprenticeship program. The apprenticeship completion grant is a \$2,000 cash grant for apprentices who successfully complete their training. In other words, apprentices could be eligible to receive up to \$4,000 in grants. I am very happy to say that to date, nearly 400,000 apprenticeship grants have been issued across the country.

In addition, employers are encouraged to support apprenticeships through the apprenticeship job creation tax credit. This initiative provides employers with a tax credit equal to 10% of the wages paid to apprentices in designated red seal trades in the first two years of their apprenticeship.

There is also a well of talent in rural and remote communities that we believe has not been fully tapped: our aboriginal people. Through our aboriginal labour market programs, our government works with partners to ensure that aboriginal people are able to take full advantage of the economic opportunities around them.

The federal government's primary programs to support the development of aboriginals' skills are the aboriginal skills and employment training strategy and the skills and partnership fund. Through ASETS, significantly funding has been committed from 2010 to 2015 to increase aboriginal participation in the Canadian labour force. With an investment of significant funds, the skills and partnership fund emphasizes our government's commitment to working with partners to develop projects based on economic opportunities.

One thing is certain: we need to think about our labour market differently. We need to use our imagination and creativity in ways we never have before. We have to think outside the box because we have to match workers and jobs. We need to find solutions to situations where we have double-digit unemployment, yet local companies are searching desperately for skilled labour.

I do believe that this is a great step. I am confident that the actions in the economic action plan 2013 will help address the labour and skills shortages.

● (1640)

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, maybe the Prime Minister should not have left the country. I think this may be the first time that two Conservatives are not on the same page with respect to their talking points. I asked the member for Calgary Northeast about the details of the Canada jobs grant and he said that he was still out there consulting, yet the Minister of Labour just said that she was really excited about this program. She must know some details that the member for Calgary Northeast does not. However, I want to ask her about something more specific today.

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She will know that one of the ways to fill a skills shortage in the country is by assisting people with labour mobility. We have people in some parts of the country who are unable to access employment whereas we have skills shortages in other parts of the country and there is an opportunity for us to do the right thing and bring people together.

The minister knows, because she has been lobbied by people in my riding, including Joe Beattie from the Hamilton-Brantford Building Trades Council, about my Bill C-201, which would facilitate such labour mobility for people who are working more than 80 kilometres away from home to be eligible for a tax credit for accommodation and travel expenses. The bill was actually supported in the HUMA committee recommendations. Could the Minister of Labour tell the House today whether she also supports the bill?

• (1645)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out the fact that I have actually had over three years of discussion with unions and management on issues of skills shortages, so I do possess a greater knowledge of detail of what the issue is. The problem will be addressed in what we are putting forward in Canada's job grant.

With respect to her bill, as the member knows, the lead minister on this is the Minister of Finance. I look forward to discussing the matter with him in due course.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on that last point, while the Minister of Labour is discussing the issue with the Minister of Finance, due to some of the changes that the government has made, we have more and more people commuting to Alberta and Saskatchewan for work. One guy told me the other day that his cost of transportation was \$18,000 for the year, but that was not deductible as an expense in going to work. Therefore, I would encourage her to talk strenuously to the Minister of Finance.

I enjoyed the minister's remarks and she made some good points on some of the things she was doing under her portfolio. However, the problem is with the other changes that the government has made, which are really affecting labour in my province. Those are the employment insurance changes. These changes are affecting labour in the seasonal industries negatively.

Does she have any solutions to propose that would stop this disincentive to work in much of rural Canada, which is happening as a result of the EI changes in those seasonal industries?

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, being from Cape Breton Island, I spend a significant amount of time visiting businesses and relatives in the area. I have had the opportunity to discuss the employment insurance changes and clarifications that we have brought in to better connect unemployed Canadians with the jobs that are available in the area. I disagree with what the member is saying.

Fundamentally, employment insurance will be there for those who need it at the time they need it. That is a truism. It will be available, and that is exactly what will happen. However, our ability to connect Canadians who do not have a job, who are searching for a job, with all of the jobs available in their area is extremely important. Information is power.

I know the member agrees with me that people out there who are on unemployment definitely want to find jobs because there is

dignity in going to work every day. That is what they are searching for and that is what we are providing when we give them the information to find where the jobs are.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to speak to something that is very important to Canadians today, and that is the skills and labour shortages. Canadians did not really need a lot of media focus on this. They live this every day and they live this because skilled Canadians apply for jobs and are told they do not have skills. Instead, workers are being brought in under the temporary foreign worker program.

Before I get started, I want to talk about the federal Canada jobs grant for workers and all the advertising that has been done. I have heard today in the House that there is some consultation going on. I have also heard from another member that this program is well researched, there is a lot of data and a lot of plans are being made. The fact is that it does not exist. What it does is creates false hope and gives people misinformation because the government is advertising something that does not exist yet. I would ask us all to take a look at that.

There is another thing I want to focus on today. I have heard a lot about apprenticeships and skills training. I want to talk a bit about my experiences as a high school counsellor and classroom teacher in a high school for a great number of years. Over the last 25 years, I have personally witnessed the decimation of the apprenticeship program and the dismantling of the skills training that used to exist. I will reference British Columbia specifically because that is the province I am very familiar with.

Just over a decade ago, British Columbia stopped funding in the same way for apprenticeship programs, the grants and things that were available, but something else happened over a decade ago. The tuition costs for the courses that apprentices took tripled and quadrupled overnight. There used to be a different fee level for apprenticeship academic courses compared to university degree courses. The government of the day in British Columbia made the fees the same. It did not lower the fees, by the way, it raised the other fees.

In the high school in Nanaimo that I taught in, there was a huge ricochet effect because suddenly many young students from struggling working-class and middle-class families found they could not afford it. Not only were the grants cut at that time in huge amounts, but also, with the costs going up and the student loan program being changed, it shut the door to a whole generation that would have gone into the skills area.

The other thing that happened was a modular program was brought in, which really put the Red Seal in jeopardy across Canada. It had a huge impact in British Columbia. When we talk about the existing skills shortage, I do not think we should talk about it as if it is something that has just been discovered in the last year or two. I believe this has been systematically created over the last few decades.

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It is only recently that the CBC covered a story where well-qualified IT people in a bank, and it happened in many banks after that, were laid off. When they were laid off, they were asked, “Before you leave, could you please train these people we are bringing in from other countries? We are going to be paying them a lot less, they can't do your jobs, train them and move on”.

● (1650)

That is not creating and nurturing skill development or utilization of the skills we have in Canada. Now we are hearing not one but hundreds of stories of people who say they came to our country to do these so-called high-tech IT jobs. When they came here they did not find it was all that it was made out to be. Many of them ended up doing other jobs.

There is a pathway to citizenship in there somewhere, but this is what it looks like. If a person is one of those temporary foreign workers who gets a pathway to citizenship and actually gets to apply for permanent residency, guess what happens. Many are coming into MPs' offices and saying that as soon as they get permanent residency, they are laid off because employers would rather bring in another group of temporary foreign workers because they can pay them less.

Therefore, it is very hard for us to believe how serious the Conservatives are about meaningful employment for Canadians where Canadians get to earn a living wage. Instead what we have seen are policies that suppress wages and policies that, from the reports we hear in the agricultural and other sectors, are very abusive relationships in the payment, the recruitment and also in the working lives of some of the workers who come here.

I want to take this opportunity to clarify something that I have said 1,000 times. It appears my colleague from Winnipeg North has not heard it and is deliberately failing to understand it and thus he misrepresents the NDP position on temporary foreign workers. I have said this 1,000 times, so let me say it again, and I hope my colleague is listening this time and that it will actually sink in.

The NDP supports a temporary foreign worker program where no Canadian is available to do the work. We support a program that addresses a specific skill shortage, where the needs are identified and temporary foreign workers come in for a temporary time while Canadian skill sets are grown. In the agricultural sector, where there is an acute shortage in many areas, we support a living wage for all and fair working conditions. With all of that in place, if there still are no Canadians available and able to do the work, that is when we look at a temporary foreign worker program.

It is under the Liberal government, by the way, that the floodgates to temporary foreign workers were opened. I know the huge tsunami of over 400,000 people hit us under the Conservative government, but it could not have taken place without the Liberals, while they were in government, opening up that floodgate. It is important that this be put on the record.

Once again, Canada is a country that has been built through immigration. Almost every one of us, except for a small handful, were either our parents, grandparents or great-great-grandparents came from another country. We came here for a variety of reasons. We came here when there was a labour shortage. I am one of those. I

came to Canada when there was a shortage of English teachers in Quebec. I did not come in as a temporary foreign worker. I and my husband came in as permanent residents. That is how we built our country.

● (1655)

If we have a legitimate skills shortage that we cannot fill, and it is only temporary, then I can see why we would use a temporary foreign worker program. However, what we are seeing is that while people in the same part of the country, in the same environment, are on employment insurance and are looking for work, the government has allowed a huge number of temporary foreign workers to come into this country and thus suppress wages. It has also created problems for many who have come into this country.

Only yesterday I read an article about a very highly trained IT worker who applied to a huge number of companies. They were all hiring. He thought that being a Canadian and having the skill set he had a crack at the jobs. However, he only heard back from two companies. The rest of them did not even acknowledge the fact that he sent his resumé in. Guess what they did? Guess what has happened to him? He did not get the jobs. Many of the jobs went to what some people call intra-company transfers.

I am going to hear the rhetoric that Conservatives fixed the program, but there is a fundamental flaw, which is that LMOs are given without due diligence and without proper oversight. When they are given that way, Canadians are not aware of the jobs, nor is there an onus on the employer to advertise those jobs in a meaningful way to make sure that it is communicated.

With high unemployment and youth unemployment sitting at double digits, the youth I talk to find it very difficult to talk about the government's economic action plan. They find it very hard to talk about all the jobs being created. All they know is that after getting into huge debt and developing skill sets they thought were going to be in demand, labour is being brought in from other countries, and they are without work. This is where the federal government has to play a role. This is where employers have to play a role as well.

Industry has an absolute obligation to develop the skill sets it needs, not on its own—I am not saying that—but in partnership. This is where the government has a critical role to play. Instead of passing the buck, it has to work with partners and industry. It has to work with community organizations. It has to work with post-secondary institutions and provide scholarships and affordability so that our youth, and those of us who are not so young but are in need of a change in career, can actually go out and get that training.

I talk to many people in their forties and fifties who are still ready and willing to work for the next 15 or 20 years, but they are being laid off. They are looking to transition into other jobs or just to do their own jobs, which are now being filled through so-called intra-company transfers.

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The recent changes to the temporary foreign worker program actually failed to address the administration and enforcement. Of course we have rules that say that an LMO can only be given “if”, but who is making sure the “if” is fulfilled? It seems recently that the way the LMOs were handed out was faster than a McDonald's fast food outlet. People could just walk in and say they wanted one and they were given some.

● (1700)

Even those that were meant only for highly skilled workers, such as the ALMOs, were handed out. No wonder the public has very little faith and very little trust that the government is there to protect their interests and to look after jobs for Canadians. B.C. is a prime example. There was the mining fiasco, where Mandarin was required while highly qualified and experienced miners were sitting right there, not being hired.

I was just talking to a young man last week as I was going door to door in my beautiful British Columbia, where the sun was shining. What he said to me was that he had heard all the hype about all the jobs that were going to be available in high tech. He spent lots of money, by the way. It was kind of astounding me when he told me the debt load he had. That debt load was much higher than the total price of the first house I bought after I graduated. That is the kind of debt load our youth are going into the future with.

What he said was that except for working in a bar and occasionally in a restaurant, he has not been able to find any work in his field. This is the field we were encouraging young people to go into, IT.

I do not have to tell members this. They have watched it on television, not that everything we watch on television is true. We have sound evidence in front of us that the IT jobs are being given away. We can call it outsourcing, in-sourcing, intra-company transfers, or the temporary foreign worker program. Whatever we call it, I call it taking jobs out of the hands of Canadians and giving them to people who do not live in Canada.

By the way, I just want to make it clear that when I am talking about taking jobs away from Canadians, it includes everybody who lives right here in Canada and has legal status in Canada as a permanent resident. It includes the people who just arrived a few weeks ago.

On Saturday, I was talking to an engineer who is now working as a taxi driver. He is highly skilled, has built bridges and did all kinds of amazing things in his home country. He came here with his skill set in hand. He got permission to come to Canada because of his skill set. However, when he got here, it was not recognized. That is the kind of tension we are creating.

I am hearing this over and over again. Being an English teacher, data is not really my forte, but all kinds of people are telling us, and I agree with them, that to plan for the future and to address the present needs, we need hard data. It seems that the government has an allergy to data. Having data might actually lead to making informed policy decisions.

Over the last number of years, what the government has done is collect less data, data that is less reliable and is not as thorough. We are hearing from industry, as well, that the data available is really not

anything we can base future labour market planning on. That should cause us all some serious concern.

When we make policy statements based on ideology rather than on the needs and the reality on the ground, it can only lead to mishaps.

One last thing I have to say is that we have to pay special attention to the needs of our aboriginal communities and the youth. Having worked very closely with the youth in those communities and having watched the high stress levels and high suicide rates, it is time we engaged them in a meaningful way to take an active part in the workforce.

● (1705)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her speech, which was excellent and very clear, as always.

In this time of globalization, a strong and competitive economy requires well-trained workers who have jobs that match their skills. Businesses want well-trained workers too. It is not really acceptable to have doctors and lawyers working as taxi drivers in downtown Montreal. This leads to other problems.

The government, in its wisdom, wants to send EI recipients to where the jobs are, yet it does not take skills into account. It also wants persons with disabilities who are available for work to take a job to the extent their disability allows. It wants to do the same for temporary foreign workers and aboriginal people too.

Obviously the Conservatives have completely ignored the fact that workers need to have the skills to do the job. No one can learn a trade overnight. The government needs to come up with a comprehensive worker training plan.

I think the hon. member is well aware of this and I would like to know a bit more about her thoughts on the issue.

[*English*]

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, for a number of decades, we have had a huge focus on academic education. I love that focus, but we also have to focus now in post-secondary education on skills development and training. We cannot leave that to just happen. That is where the governments, provincial and federal, have to work in partnership with employers to make sure we are developing the skill sets for the next decade.

To do that in a meaningful way, we need data, which the government is allergic to. If it is allergic to data and yet needs data to make good, informed decisions, what it will do is keep making decisions that will not get it anywhere. Therefore, I believe we have to invest in a very serious way, not just with a few dollars here or there.

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•(1710)

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Science and Technology) (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would ask the member if she could comment on the ridiculousness of some of her statements. First, she is now asking that we force Canadians to move anywhere in Canada to get a job. This is after months of beating up on the Minister of Human Resources for having an employment program that required folks to move within an hour.

Second, we put \$2 billion into post-secondary education to rebuild research infrastructure but also to lower the pressure on rising tuition fees. One of those projects was at Conestoga College, in my riding. It will now produce about a thousand skilled trades students in the food industry, which is the second largest manufacturing sector in Ontario.

The member and her party vote against it every single time. That is data. How do you respond to that hypocrisy?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I would remind the minister and all hon. members to orient their questions to the Chair rather than to their colleagues.

The hon. member for Newton—North Delta.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, there are Canadians with skills, in the areas where they live, where temporary foreign workers are doing the jobs they were doing and could be doing today. No one can deny that. That is firm data. The Alberta Federation of Labour has produced a report that does that matching. The CBC has focused on what is happening in the banking industry, and it is not just RBC.

Is it not coincidental that this huge program the minister talked about happens to be in his riding? We are very happy for him. However, right across Canada, there are Canadians ready and willing to work. At no time did I say pick people up and move them from one province forcibly to another. There are people who are willing to be mobile and who are willing to work where jobs are available. The same jobs they were removed from are being done by someone else. What is the minister's answer to that?

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is related to the importance of communication between the premiers and the Prime Minister's Office. We have never seen a first ministers conference under the present Prime Minister, where the premiers come to Ottawa or the Prime Minister has a conference in another jurisdiction. It is important for us to develop the skill sets. There has to be communication between the different levels of government, and I would ultimately argue even beyond that. However, it does not appear to be a priority for the Conservative government.

I would ask my colleague to respond to the need for the different stakeholders—and when I talk about stakeholders, I am referring to students, employers, government agencies, and post-secondary facilities such as universities, colleagues and so forth—to meet the demand for the skills for today and tomorrow. Would the member agree that there needs to be better communication, at all levels, and strong leadership from the Prime Minister's Office?

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, every time I hear the word “stakeholder” I quiver. I have watched too many movies involving a stake and a hammer. It makes me shiver.

I absolutely believe that there is a need for partnerships. The federal government, as well as provincial and municipal governments, industry and post-secondary institutions, need to work together to come up with programs that will lead to greater skills development for today and tomorrow. For that we need data, and the government is allergic to data.

•(1715)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my Conservative colleague across the way behaved very rudely. He blabbered on while my colleague was responding. This kind of behaviour and lack of respect is typical of the Conservatives.

I would like to know whether she thinks this government's biggest challenge is basically to agree, to come to a consensus and to talk with other levels of government, particularly when we know there are horror stories in her region. In fact, some owners are exaggerating about the living conditions of temporary workers employed by fast food chains.

[*English*]

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, we have heard stories from some temporary foreign workers, who have been brought into the country to work in restaurants, about incredibly difficult working conditions. We cannot imagine the kinds of pressure and abuse that these people have to face.

Only three weeks ago I dealt with a cook who came here from Spain. He told me that his first day at work was beautiful. He really liked the first two days. Once he finished his second day, his employer told him that his wife had to start coming in the following week. The cook said he was the only one who had applied for the job, so his wife would not be coming in. He was actually told not to bother coming back to work unless he and his wife came together.

We have also heard stories about workers who are not being paid their full wages, or workers who have to pay money to consultants.

Not every employer is like that. Not every person who comes into this country receives that kind of abuse. We live in Canada, which is a democratic country. We have to enforce our labour rules in each of the provinces. We have to make sure that the people who come here when we need them get a living wage and are treated fairly, in the same way that Canadians are treated.

Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to respond to this debate on the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. The report is titled, “Labour and Skills Shortages in Canada: Addressing Current and Future Challenges”. Our government supports concurrence in this report because it highlights a very real skills gap facing Canada. I am a member of the human resources committee and I listened to the evidence of the witnesses. My comments will reflect the facts that the witnesses presented.

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There are employers who cannot grow their businesses because they cannot find workers with the skills they need. At the same time, there are Canadians looking to fill these jobs but they do not have the skills needed to qualify. This is why our government took further action in budget 2013 to more directly connect skills training to jobs that are currently available. We will do this through the Canada jobs grant. The grant moves training decisions out of the hands of government and into those most qualified to determine in-demand skills, those being employers with unfilled jobs.

Most notably, a new Canada jobs grant will provide up to 130,000 Canadians a year with \$15,000 or more to retrain. The amount of \$5,000 from that will come from the federal government, with the provinces and territories expected to match that contribution. As our Minister of Finance said at the time, "For the first time, the Canada Job Grant will take skills-training choices out of the hands of government and put them where they belong in the hands of employers and Canadians who want to work".

There are currently thousands of jobs available across Canada going unfilled, at great cost to the economy and all Canadians. With baby boomers starting to retire in large numbers, we are experiencing real skills shortages. This is undermining our country's competitiveness and ongoing economic growth. We are also working to improve the training of apprentices to fill needs in the skills trades. To reduce barriers to accreditation, we will invest over three years to work with provinces and territories to harmonize requirements and examine the use of practical tests as a method of assessment.

We are also reforming procurement practices to encourage contractors to hire apprentices on federal construction and maintenance projects, and we will work with the provinces and territories to ensure that they too support employment of apprentices. Our economic action plan also improves supports to groups who are currently under-represented in the job market, such as youth, Canadians with disabilities, aboriginal people and newcomers to Canada. We want to ensure every Canadian can find a place in the job market because Canadian employers need every last one of them.

With regard to youth, economic action plan 2013 proposes several strategic investments to help them at different stages of their education and careers. For example, to make maximum use of the education and talents of recent graduates, we will, through the career focus program, support 5,000 more paid internships for recent post-secondary graduates. We will also invest over two years to improve labour market information for young people considering careers in high-demand fields, such as the skills trades, science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

Under our government's action plan, Canada will continue to have one of the lowest youth unemployment rates in the G7. Since 2006, our government has helped 2.1 million youth obtain skills training and jobs. This year alone our measures have created 60,000 jobs for youth. Approximately 400,000 Canadian apprenticeship grants have been handed out to youth since 2007, helping thousands of youth fill skilled trades jobs. These youth-focused initiatives are accompanied by supports for persons with disabilities, aboriginal people and newcomers.

● (1720)

We will continue to work with provinces and territories and stakeholders to enhance the foreign credential recognition processes to increase the successful integration of internationally trained professionals into the job market.

Our ultimate goal is to nurture and enable economic growth by creating more opportunities for all Canadians.

There have been several references today to the temporary foreign worker program. Let me be clear. This program was never intended to allow for the outsourcing of Canadian jobs. When concerns were raised about the program, we acted quickly to ensure the interests of Canadian workers came first. Last month we announced several changes to the program. Before issuing a labour market opinion, we will make sure, through beefed-up questions, that the temporary foreign worker program is not used to enable the outsourcing of Canadian jobs.

Through legislative and regulatory amendments currently before the House, we would increase the government's authority to suspend or revoke work permits and labour market opinions if the program is being misused. We would now require employers who rely on temporary foreign workers to have a firm plan in place to transition to a Canadian workforce. Effective immediately, we would also temporarily suspend the accelerated labour market opinion process in order to determine whether it is the best approach. Our goal continues to be to process applications as efficiently as possible, while ensuring that Canadian workers always come first.

In addition, fees for processing LMOs and work permits would be introduced so that taxpayers are no longer obliged to subsidize the cost of processing these applications. We would require that employers who use the program pay temporary foreign workers at or above the average wage for a job.

The opposition voted against providing funding to skills training for Canadians to qualify for jobs that might otherwise have been filled by temporary foreign workers. It has continued to vote against the legislative changes we are attempting to introduce to ensure the government has the tools to discover and crack down on businesses that are abusing the temporary foreign worker program.

I would like to point out that we have put forward measures to help unemployed Canadians access labour market information to transition back into the labour force more quickly. For example, through enhanced job alerts, registered claimants can receive information up to twice daily on jobs available in their area.

Routine Proceedings

We need everyone's skills and talents at work to meet labour market demands and support the economy. We need action on all fronts, which our government is already taking, to create jobs and economic growth that will ensure continued prosperity for all Canadians. Canada is experiencing significant skills shortages in many regions and sectors of the economy, but we must always keep Canadians first whenever there are job openings.

We have heard from a lot of the opposition MPs when it comes to a plan. Well, we have a plan. It is a plan that the opposition has voted against every step of the way. Our economic action plan has delivered on our commitment to Canadians to focus our efforts on jobs, growth and long-term prosperity.

Canadians understood that the economic leadership of our Prime Minister was a key to navigating the difficult economic times we have faced in the recent past. That trust paid off, by electing a strong and stable national Conservative government.

We have seen the creation of over 900,000 net new jobs. Most are full-time jobs in the private sector, with over two-thirds being in high-wage industries. This reflects the strength of Canada's economy amidst global economic uncertainty.

●(1725)

As good as these results are, however, our focus is still on getting Canadians back to work. While there are currently thousands of jobs across Canada going unfilled, there are still too many Canadians looking for work. We are confronted with mismatches between the existing skills of the local labour force in some regions and the skills required by employers for new jobs. This is leading to shortages in some occupations that are key to our competitiveness and continued economic growth.

Therefore, the Conservatives are pleased to support concurrence on this report and to call on all members of this House to work with us to address the skills gap. This can be most directly demonstrated by supporting our economic action plan and the budget implementation act that is now working its way through the House of Commons.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again, I listened to the speech given by my colleague opposite.

I would like to ask him a question. How can he ask us to support this kind of initiative when the government is making political hay by broadcasting ads about a program that the provinces have not yet been able to weigh in on?

[*English*]

Mr. Colin Mayes: Mr. Speaker, one thing the committee found during our discussions with the witnesses who came forward was that a lot of the needs, the skills gaps and opportunities for jobs of today were not communicated well enough to the general public and to educational institutions across the country. What came out over and over again is that we need to better communicate those opportunities and what the government is doing to help come alongside people who want to get this skills training. This is just part of the program. Sure, it is going to be coming in the near future, but it is making Canadians aware so they can prepare themselves to get into the workforce.

●(1730)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a relatively simple question for the member. Canada is at an all-time high of approximately 338,000 temporary foreign workers, more than we have ever had in Canada.

Why has the government done such a poor job at equipping Canadians with the skills necessary to fill those thousands of jobs that could not be filled? Apparently, according to the Conservatives, employers had to look outside Canada in order to find workers to fill those jobs. In the member's opinion, what did the Conservative government do wrong so that employers were unable to fill thousands of jobs with people who live in Canada?

Mr. Colin Mayes: Mr. Speaker, the member, as I understand, was part of a provincial government and knows that skills training is the responsibility of the provincial government. The problem has been the communication between the provinces and the skills training to meet the needs of the employers of today. That is why we determined with our Canada jobs grant that there would be funding for the in-demand jobs so we could ensure those job needs are met.

It is obvious that the program has not worked in the past because there was such a skills gap. Our government is willing to take action and move with the provinces and with employers to make this happen, to ensure we get not only the people trained but people who are trained in the right skills so they can meet the needs of today.

The Deputy Speaker: I understand the hon. Leader of the Government in the House of Commons has an intervention.

* * *

EXTENSION OF SITTING HOURS

NOTICE OF CLOSURE MOTION

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to give notice that with respect to consideration of Government Business No. 17, at the next sitting a minister of the Crown shall move, pursuant to Standing Order 57, that debate be not further adjourned.

* * *

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, certainly in the area I represent, in the province of Alberta, the biggest threat to our economy is a lack of labour, and skilled labour is in great shortage. I know many companies in the oil business and many other types of businesses that cannot find people. There are too many jobs that go unfilled in Canada because the right type of people cannot be found. However, part of our budget, part of this last economic action plan, is the Canada job grant and part of this program would allow business to pay a portion.

Routine Proceedings

The member spoke about youth. Does he believe that part of recruitment will now be carried out by the business community?

Businesses will move into the high schools and explain why they want to hire youth and give incentives. In the past, governments and others tried to perhaps find unemployed persons and put them into positions. However, businesses will now recruit these young men and women, help them get skilled and train them if they work for them. That is the job grant. Perhaps the member would like to expand on that.

• (1735)

Mr. Colin Mayes: Mr. Speaker, interestingly, we heard today from witnesses at committee that 90% of the temporary foreign workers are actually in the western provinces, which shows the need the member just talked about.

We identified with the union representatives who attended the meeting and talked about the issues of skills shortages and communicating with youth in high schools, colleges and universities about opportunities.

It is interesting that in Canada the average person going into the trades is 26 years old. Most have gone through university, got their degree, but when they came out they could not find a job and then had to go back into skills training. We are saying that we should eliminate the university and get right into the skills training. Part of the Canada job grant is to connect the job and make youth aware of the opportunities in the skilled trades.

[Translation]

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech by the hon. member for Okanagan—Shuswap, and I have two questions for him.

The Conservatives have not yet discussed the impact of the Canada job grant with the provinces. Does the hon. member think that the provinces are partners when it comes to employment in Canada, or does he think they get in the way more than anything?

Moreover, the Conservatives have spent thousands of dollars to advertise a program that has not yet been implemented. My colleague from Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher asked the question previously, but the hon. member did not really answer, so I will repeat it. Why spend thousands of dollars for a program that does not even exist?

[English]

Mr. Colin Mayes: Mr. Speaker, the discussions at the table were interesting, especially with the unions. The member opposite should be aware that the unions have a great part to play in some of these needs, because they see it every day. They are the ones who really helped to put together a strategy. Of course, our government is willing to listen to Canadians and find out what the needs are, and so we reacted to that. Obviously this program was based on information that was provided to the committee. It had to be done in a timely fashion because the longer we wait to put these people into training and get them into the workforce, the more it will jeopardize our economy and the growth that we anticipate for our country.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was listening to the debate with interest and my colleague from Okanagan—Shuswap commented that there may be some justifica-

tion that it is perhaps better that young people do not go to university and go straight into trades instead.

My view is that it is best if all young people have a chance to graduate from high school and are then able to make the choice of whether to go into trades or to university.

Therefore, I would ask my colleague this. There is an underfunding of aboriginal people on reserve compared to the provincial and territorial funding for young people in small communities. That results in an unfortunate high level of young people on reserve who do not graduate from high school and perhaps do not go into technical training or university. Should that not be addressed by his government so that equitable funding is provided for aboriginal people on reserve?

Mr. Colin Mayes: Mr. Speaker, I want to clarify that I was not suggesting that all students should not go to university and should look at the trades. Rather, that is obviously an opportunity they need to be exposed to.

When I first came to this place in 2006, I was the chair of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. We did a study on post-secondary education for aboriginal students. The outcome of that study was that if aboriginal students were to get to the grade 12 level the percentage who would go on to post-secondary education was the same as non-aboriginal people in Canada. The issue was to get them to grade 12. One of the recommendations was to try to introduce some of the skills and job opportunities in the areas close to the community. That was very important, especially with the young aboriginal males because they might not want to leave their communities in the north and would rather want to look at the opportunities with respect to mining or whatever economic activity was happening in the area.

Our government has put together a first nations job fund of \$109 million over five years and \$132 million over five years to create the service delivery structure to further help aboriginals get the skills they need to fill the jobs in their area.

• (1740)

[Translation]

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to rise in the House today to speak about a report that was tabled by a committee of which I am a member. In the next few minutes, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

We are focusing our attention on a study tabled by the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities. This report, which is entitled “Addressing Current and Future Challenges”, deals with the labour and skills shortage in Canada. The report does indeed contain some solutions. However, the entire NDP caucus believes that these solutions are highly inadequate.

Routine Proceedings

Committee members spoke at length about certain recurring points, such as the lack of interest in skilled trades observed throughout the provinces. For several decades now, post-secondary education has been promoted and a BA or other degree has been touted as the key to success. Now, this is causing a significant lack of people with training in skilled trades, and there is a shortage of plumbers and electricians across the country.

In 2008, before the economic crisis and the never-ending economic difficulties, there were signs all along highway 20. Just outside Beloeil, there was a giant sign that said “we are looking for” or “we are looking to hire 12 electricians tomorrow morning”. At the time, before the recent crisis, there was already a labour shortage, particularly in the skilled trades.

The bad news is that, if we are fortunate enough to see a true economic recovery in 2014-15, we will be in exactly the same position, with the same problems we had in 2008. Billions of dollars have been invested in the Conservative government's much-vaunted economic action plans over the past few years. The government could have shown some vision, but it did not. It sometimes even made mistakes. If there is an economic recovery tomorrow, the day after tomorrow or in 2014, we will be in the same position as we were in 2008.

The good news is that, when it came right down to it, all members recognized that the major challenge of the first half of the 21st century would be a lack of human resources. Conservative and NDP members agreed on this.

The not-so-good news is that the government engaged in a completely ridiculous exercise, which is particularly evident at the end of the report, where almost all of the testimony was manipulated. For example, the Conservative majority linked everything that the witnesses said to 2012 budget initiatives.

A standing committee should be a place where members have all the freedom they need to recommend to a minister whether an initiative should be carried out in a certain way, or faster or slower, and so on. Such a place no longer exists.

Witnesses are now being ground down by the Conservative majority, which hacks every argument to bits until each little piece falls into place and conforms with ministers' decisions made months or even a year ago.

Thus, the committees are being completely manipulated. We have known this for the past two years. In this report, however, this exercise is no longer simply verging on the absurd; it has become wholly and utterly absurd.

There is another problem. Throughout the study, this obsession with reducing the size of government was apparent. Let us clear this up once and for all. There are times when the government must support a vision. In order to do so, it sometimes has to spend a little money in order to make more money. Yes, the government can do that. It sounds crazy, but it has happened in the past.

Today we are faced with a huge challenge. We will not have enough human resources, especially entrepreneurs. Quebec alone needs 70,000 people to ensure the entrepreneurial succession of

SMEs. That is the big challenge facing our economy and it is by far this government's favourite subject.

● (1745)

As soon as the witnesses started talking about the need to provide more resources, the Conservative majority started tuning them out.

During witness testimonies we heard endless stories such as that of a 20-year-old without the necessary support to become an apprentice because there was a waiting period to receive employment insurance benefits and because the help provided to apprentices does not last for the duration of the apprenticeship.

It is not a total success. Depending on the program and province, 30% to 40% of apprentices drop out. Because the government tries to save a few thousand dollars by failing to support the apprentice for the duration of his apprenticeship, that apprentice resorts to employment insurance or social assistance or returns to an unstable job.

Instead of responding to an urgent need, like the need to have more electricians who earn excellent salaries, we lose that young apprentice. We lose a taxpayer who might have earned an annual salary of \$35,000, \$45,000, \$55,000, \$65,000, or \$70,000. All because the Conservatives are obsessed with reducing the size of government. The Conservatives do not understand that sometimes they need to invest a bit of money simply to generate wealth and purchasing power. The return on investment can be tenfold or better over a period of 5 to 10 years.

The members opposite do not have this on their radar even though the witnesses agreed that the government needs to make more of an effort and invest more in order to successfully meet this tremendous challenge.

The NDP agrees with a number of the recommendations in the report. I will go over a few of them here. However, none of them go far enough. The Conservatives' logic seems to be, “this is something important that the government should do, but it will cost a lot of money, so let us pretend we did not see it”. It is dizzying.

Let us now look at the second recommendation in the report:

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada continue its efforts toward achieving better and more user-friendly labour market information, which could [note: could] in turn [if they get that far] be provided to students, graduates and job seekers...

They are so hypocritical. They make cuts to everything that has to do with statistics. They cut resources for statistics gathering even though they know that good statistics are essential for making the right decisions in order to do something about this desperate nationwide labour shortage.

We know there is a problem, so in our minority report, we wrote something that took incredible courage. We wrote clearly that, “New Democrats recommend providing Statistics Canada with the funding it needs to improve labour force-related surveys and restoring core funding to Sector Councils.”

Oh, what a big expense. Yes, it would cost the government something. However, on the other hand, how can we tackle the greatest challenge of the early 21st century if we do not even have the resources to properly define it?

Routine Proceedings

I will now read recommendation 13:

The Committee recommends that the Government of Canada review the resources allocated to the Adult Learning, Literacy and Essential Skills Program to confirm the current levels are sufficient to raise the basic skill level for adults.

Literacy statistics have stagnated for 40 years now. For 40 years, we have known that approximately 20% of our fellow Canadians do not have the basic skills to respond to a simple human resources need like working as a cashier at Petro-Canada. The problem has been around for 40 years. There is no recommendation about allocating adequate resources to resolve this problem. The problem is there and the Conservatives know it.

I would have liked to comment on other recommendations, but I will speak briefly to another aspect that I think is an absolute priority. It is not even about government money, but money that belongs to employers and employees. We have to build the employment insurance fund and leave the money there so that we can respond to urgent, essential industry needs.

I have here the testimony of Mr. Atkinson, the president of the Canadian Construction Association. He said:

One of the things that our industry has been calling for, and, indeed, this committee recommended, was to provide either some tax incentives through the Income Tax Act or some support for relocation expenses through the EI system for workers relocating on a temporary basis.

• (1750)

Someone from the construction industry, not someone from the far left, is simply saying that we need to let the employment insurance fund grow. Workers have basic needs; they need to be mobile so they can get the training they need. Please, let the fund grow.

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I really liked my colleague's conclusion. This leads me to raise what I think is a relevant point. Employment insurance included funds allocated for training. These funds were drained. A separate program was created and announced, but no agreement has been reached with the provinces. This did not stop the government from advertising the program.

I would like my hon. colleague to continue talking about a broader and more inclusive vision in terms of not only job training but also skills development for the jobs of tomorrow.

Mr. François Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

The Canada job grant program is a striking example. It has been launched in a rather dogmatic fashion. We know that the provinces were not consulted. What is more, the provinces are opposed to the program for the good reason that training is their jurisdiction.

SME employers and entrepreneurs are also opposed to the program for a very simple reason. The federal-provincial-SME partnership will provide a \$15,000 grant. It is much more difficult for a small business that urgently needs to train a plumber, for example, or for an SME in an outlying area than for Bombardier or a major car manufacturer in southern Ontario to pay its one-third share of the grant. Small businesses believe that the program is completely ill-conceived.

Furthermore, employers contribute to the employment insurance fund, and this money is systematically put into the consolidated

revenue fund. What happens to this money? We really are not sure. The government buys British submarines that do not work or things like that.

Instead, the fund should be built up, and we should sit down with these people and tell them that we have the money if they need apprentices or training programs.

In Scotland, for example, workers who lose their jobs have to take a literacy test. If it is found that they have difficulty entering the job market because they cannot read, for example, they receive employment insurance for several weeks while they learn to read. Yes, it does cost money, but in the end, someone who is literate can enter the job market with skills. He or she can meet the needs of service businesses that are having difficulty finding people just to be cashiers.

Until we address the structural problem, we will not make any progress, and business people's money will continue to go into a fund that will be squandered. I hope it will not be spent on F-35s this time.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Sorenson (Crowfoot, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I really wish that the member would come to my riding of Crowfoot in Alberta. I would love to take him around the riding and show him the restaurants where signs say they cannot find waitresses or employees or people to fill the jobs. Come to some of the places where oil and gas companies are doing everything they can to keep and retain their employees. They tell us that the temporary foreign worker program is very important, as are many of the programs this government is bringing forward.

If the opposition members are serious about connecting Canadians with available jobs, I would encourage them to take a look at the measures in budget 2013. They are put there because, as we heard earlier, we realize the situation. We realize that 90% of the employers who apply for temporary foreign workers are from Alberta. They are from a place where they cannot find Canadians who are willing to work in those places.

What is the opposition's plan for dealing with skills and labour shortages? We know it has a \$21 billion carbon tax it would like to put in to drive the economy down more, but what plan do you have for places like Alberta where we cannot—

• (1755)

The Deputy Speaker: I would direct the member for Crowfoot to direct all comments and questions to the Chair, not to individual members.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup. He has 30 seconds remaining.

Mr. François Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, I will try to be very concise.

The problem is not with bringing in temporary workers. The problem is that they are part of a temporary worker program. If their help has been needed 12 months a year for the past 10 years, they should be allowed to immigrate. That is all we are saying. That is clear.

Routine Proceedings

If 20% of people—the statistics are the same in every province—do not have the essential skills even to be a cashier, investments need to be made so that Canadians can reach a certain standard of living and have a better job. If these measures are applied and are given the necessary resources, yet an entrepreneur still cannot manage to open an inn or a business because of a labour shortage, then we agree. However, it is imperative that we develop a valid immigration system and support people who need to obtain basic skills. Those solutions, which will make Canadians richer and more prosperous, must be our priority, not an ill-conceived temporary worker program.

[English]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will try to be brief, but there is a lot to cover.

I commend the committee for doing this review and coming together with a good number of unanimous recommendations. I commend our representatives for their additional recommendations and for bringing this matter forward to the House. We have had an excellent debate today.

There is one thing that troubles me in going through the report. I will go through this in great detail because it is of most interest to me, particularly because a lot of the recommendations raise programs that the government has historically funded, but has made the decision of late to de-fund.

I go to recommendation 1, formal public-private academic partnerships to coordinate labour market evaluations. As I mentioned earlier in the House, I have had the privilege of sitting on the environment sector table board for seven years. The government has decided to end that organization, along with all the other sector tables.

The value of the environment sector table, which was ECO Canada, Environmental Careers Organization Canada, was that several times a year it did labour market analyses. Year after year it showed that the highest growing area of employment in our country, in fact worldwide, was in the environmental field. There are endless possibilities for work, endless opportunities for aboriginal Canadians and recent immigrants. The government is ending these sector tables.

One of the things this organization did was form partnerships between universities and small colleges with industry, with the community and with first nation communities on identifying needed jobs and areas of activity where we could be working together.

Another recommendation that I find rather odd is recommendation 14, which encourages young people to acquire work experience through the Canada summer jobs program, particularly including French-English language development.

It is sad to report to the House that for more than half of the jobs under the Canada summer jobs program in my riding for which there was huge demand, as I have three university campuses and one technical college campus, many people were providing opportunity for students. Many of those were bilingual opportunities, and they were not funded. Why? Because the government is not funding that program adequately.

Very sadly, also, the government decided to shut down its funding for the Experimental Lakes Area. That was one of the best programs

for providing science-based job opportunities for university students. The government de-funded it, and yet it signed off on a recommendation in the report to create those exact kinds of programs.

As the government moves forward and responds to this report, which is invaluable, I am looking forward to it perhaps reconsidering some of the decisions to cut the funding for these very important programs.

As Shawn Atleo, the National Chief of the Assembly of First Nations, pointed out, in the area of aboriginal Canadians, far more aboriginal youth are being incarcerated than graduating from high school, yet the government still continues to underfund the education opportunities for students, including at university level and technical schools. There is, as I understand, 13,000 students waiting to get into these programs, but there are insufficient funds.

It is one thing to sign off on the report and make recommendations, it is another thing to actually budget for it and support programs.

My final comment would be what my colleague from Newton—North Delta asked, which was why the government was not working on the skill set for the next decade. I had many young people in my riding lined up to start companies to do energy efficiency audits and energy retrofits in homes. Then the government in its wisdom decided to provide the funding for eco-energy home retrofits for only one year, ending all opportunities for these youth, which would have been well-paying jobs using their technical skills.

I commend all of those who participated in this report. We look forward to action on it.

• (1800)

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings at this time and put forth the question on the motion now before the House.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, I ask that the vote be moved to after government orders.

The Deputy Speaker: The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

*Routine Proceedings***PETITIONS**

NUCLEAR FUEL PROCESSING LICENCE

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions. The first is in respect to the GE Hitachi nuclear fuel processing facility in my riding. A few months ago the people of Davenport awoke to the news that this facility had been operating for 50 years in the riding. They were to have engaged in a very broad and important public engagement process over the course of those 50 years and had not.

The petitioners call on the Nuclear Safety Commission to reopen the licence so the public can have its rightful moment to participate in a discussion about the facility. I am honoured to present this on behalf of the people in my riding.

• (1805)

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is with respect to the fact that many companies, phone companies, now banks and telecoms of all sorts, are charging their customers \$2 and up just to receive their paper bill in the mail. This negatively affects seniors and those who do not have access to the Internet. It negatively affects those who are in a fixed income situation.

The petitioners call on the government and relevant agencies to take the issue seriously as it is an issue of fairness, especially for those on the margins of our society, and to call on companies to stop this practice.

VIOLENCE AGAINST BUS WORKERS

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present four petitions from my riding.

The first petition comes from residents of Regina who express concern about violent assault against public bus drivers. The petitioners feel the bus drivers face increasing risk of being assaulted and deserve stronger protection under the law.

The petitioners call upon Parliament to amend the Criminal Code to recognize the incidents of violence against bus workers in the same way as peace officers are recognized in the code.

EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next petition is also from Regina residents.

The petitioners draw the attention of the House to the Experimental Lakes Area. They are asking the government to recognize the importance of the Experimental Lakes Area and to reverse its decision on the Experimental Lakes Area, as well as to continue to staff and provide financial resources.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ALFALFA

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my next petition is from the residents of Regina. It pertains to the introduction of genetically modified alfalfa before variety registration.

The petitioners are concerned about this issue for a number of reasons, including contamination, new clusters, testing and cleanup and possible loss of farm safe seed.

The petitioners are asking for a moratorium on the release of genetically modified alfalfa to allow for a review of how it affects Canadian farmers.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my final petition is from residents of Moose Jaw.

The petitioners state that the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada oppose sex selection. Millions of girls have been lost through sex-selective pregnancy termination.

The petitioners ask Parliament to condemn this form of discrimination against females.

LYME DISEASE

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

The first petition is from residents of Vancouver, Alberta, as well as within my riding, in Sidney, Salt Spring Island and Victoria, in support of private member's bill, Bill C-442. This is my bill calling for a national Lyme disease strategy.

I am very gratified by hearing from so many members that they are also concerned in hearing from Lyme disease patients in their own communities. I hope there will be full-party support for this private member's bill.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition I am bringing forward today is from residents of the Vancouver area, as well as some from Saanich.

The petitioners are calling for the government to reassess its commitment and support for the Enbridge northern gateway project, but rather to assume a neutral stance and allow the evidence to be collected.

SEX SELECTION

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present.

The first one is from residents all across the country. The petitioners ask that the House condemn discrimination against females occurring through sex-selective pregnancy termination. They say that this is the worst form of discrimination against females and want Parliament to take action on it.

CRIMINAL CODE

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next two petitions are on the target the market model.

Petitioners are requesting that Parliament amend the Criminal Code to decriminalize the selling of sexual services and criminalize the purchasing of sexual services and provide support to those who desire to leave prostitution. This is a result of the Swedish and Nordic models to target the market. Those are the people who buy sex and victimize young victims.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions.

Routine Proceedings

The first petition is from residents of Edmonton, Leduc, Cold Lake, Valleyview, basically from across Alberta. The petitioners state that the decisions made by the federal government should be based on sound and objective science data, that cancelling research projects and monitoring has a negative impact on the environment, that scientists should be allowed to express themselves freely and that laying off hundreds of scientists threatens Canada's ability to monitor.

Therefore, they call on the Government of Canada to end its muzzling of scientists, to reverse the cuts to research programs at Environment Canada, DFO, Library and Archives, the National Research Council, Statistics Canada, Natural Sciences Engineering Research Council of Canada and to cancel the closures of the National Council of Welfare and First Nations Statistical Institute.

• (1810)

HEALTH CARE

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): The second petition, Mr. Speaker, is from residents from across Alberta, from Devon, Edmonton, Cold Lake and a variety of other places.

They petition the House of Commons to support public health care. They say that they support the public health care system to ensure every Canadian has access to the same high-quality health services wherever they live. To achieve this goal, they call for a pan-Canadian prescription drug strategy, funding transfers to the provinces and territories to enable consistent high-quality home and long-term care, a pan-Canadian health human resources strategy for primary care and improved living conditions, including access to food, housing, living wages, social and mental health services and better living conditions for aboriginal peoples.

SHARK FINNING

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions signed by Canadians across the land.

The petitioners call on the government to ban the importation of shark fin to Canada. They talk specifically about the practice of shark finning that results in an estimated 73 million sharks a year being killed for their fins alone and that over one-third of all shark species are threatened with extinction as a result of shark finning.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 1266, 1274, 1279 and 1293.

[Text]

Question No. 1266—**Mr. Frank Valeriote:**

With respect to the organizations that officially requested the attendance of the Minister of Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism at an event since January 1, 2011: (a) what were the names of the organizations, the names of the events, the organizers, the dates, times, and locations; (b) did the Minister attend the event and, if not, what is the name of the government representative who attended the event in lieu of the Minister; and (c) what were the costs of any government advertisements in event publications or greetings, and the description and costs of any gifts to the event or organizers?

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to section (a) and section (b), a comprehensive response would require an arduous and time-consuming manual search of all of CIC's reports and is not feasible in the requested time frame.

With regard to section (c), the information requested is not readily available through CIC's financial system.

Question No. 1274—**Ms. Elizabeth May:**

With regard to the costs of the July 16, 2010, press conference in Ottawa, Ontario, at which the Minister of National Defence announced the government's intention to procure F-35s for the Royal Canadian Air Force, what were the costs incurred by the government (not including the cost of \$47,313 related to the model F-35 used at the conference and described in Order Paper question Q-596) for: (a) flying in a Canadian CF-18 as part of the press conference, including fuel, maintenance, storage, Departmental personnel, and transportation; (b) all personnel, including those from Department of National Defence or other Departments involved in the press conference; (c) audio-visual support, including Departmental personnel, equipment rentals, translation, and any contracting services provided; (d) venue setup and dismantling, including costs related to seating, catering, lighting, and accommodating media; and (e) the entire press conference inclusive, including those related to the model F-35 described in Order Paper question Q-596?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of National Defence, CPC):

Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the costs related to the flight of a CF-18 during the press conference on July 16, 2010, were approximately \$200 for the pilot's hotel and per diem expenses. There were no costs associated with the aircraft itself, as it was using allocated annual flying hours related to the pilot's training activities.

With regard to (b), the cost for personnel was \$13,298, based on 230.25 hours of overtime that Department of National Defence civilian staff worked in support of, or in relation to, the conference. The temporary duty expenses for Royal Canadian Air Force personnel at this event were \$5,362.

With regard to (c), audiovisual support for the press conference cost \$22,603.

With regard to (d), the cost of a working lunch for subject matter experts totaled \$113. Other venue costs included electricity at \$2,178 and water and fruit platters at \$236.

With regard to (e), the entire event cost the Government of Canada \$47,513.

Question No. 1279—**Mr. Glenn Thibeault:**

With regard to section 347 of the Criminal Code, broken down by fiscal year for each fiscal year since 2006-2007: (a) how many investigations has the RCMP carried out into contraventions of this provision; (b) how many charges have been laid; and (c) how many successful prosecutions have been carried out?

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, section 347 of the Criminal Code is not an offence that falls solely under the RCMP mandate. It is an offence that is also reported to and investigated by the local police force. The RCMP is the police of jurisdiction in many smaller communities across the country, but not usually the police of jurisdiction in the larger urban municipalities.

In the RCMP's former records management system, called "Police Information Retrieval System", PIRS, section 347 of the Criminal Code is mapped to a general violation code called "Other Criminal Code" along with a multitude of other offences.

A manual case-by-case analysis of all these files would be required in order to provide a complete and accurate response to all parts of this question. Such an analysis cannot be completed within the time available, as a significant amount of time and resources would be required in order to do so.

Question No. 1293—**Ms. Elizabeth May:**

With regard to the National Geographic television program "Border Security: Canada's Front Line": (a) what is the total cost to the government for any support provided by the Department of Public Safety or by the Canadian Border Services Agency in relation to the program; (b) in what form or forms has this support been provided; (c) what are the contents of any agreements signed by the government related to this program; and (d) for both the (i) Department of Public Safety and (ii) Canadian Border Services Agency, what is the total cost of all resources that have been allocated to negotiating, researching, or communicating the government's participation in this television program?

Hon. Vic Toews (Minister of Public Safety, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Public Safety Canada did not incur any costs related to the National Geographic television program "Border Security: Canada's Front Line".

With regard to (a), the production takes place at no extra cost to the CBSA's front-line operations. For season one of the production, the CBSA incurred an internal cost of less than \$60,000, primarily for salary dollars for the required administrative support, including on-site oversight within one region. Season two will be twice the number of episodes and involve more than one region. As such, the CBSA has estimated internal costs to be approximately \$160,000 for the required administrative oversight.

There is no exchange of monies between the production company and the CBSA.

With regard to (b), the costs noted in part (a) relate to the CBSA providing administrative support such as regional on-site filming oversight to ensure privacy and operational security during production.

With regard to (c), there are three multimedia agreements between the CBSA and Force Four Productions related to the documentary series, one to govern the production of the demonstration reel and a separate one for each of the first and second seasons in which the CBSA has participated. The multimedia agreements detail the working relationship, responsibilities and requirements of each party and outline the precautions necessary to safeguard Canadian laws as well as CBSA employees, facilities, operations and procedures.

Further, the agreement stipulates that while editorial control rests with the production company, the CBSA will review the content of

each episode before airing to verify that operational, legal and privacy considerations are met.

With regard to (d)(ii), no incremental costs were incurred by the CBSA for negotiating, researching or communicating the government's participation in the documentary series.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if a supplementary response to Question No. 1259, originally tabled on May 9, as well as Questions Nos. 1267, 1272 and 1275 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

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

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

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1267—**Mr. Frank Valeriote:**

With regard to the Prime Minister's Office, as of February 1, 2013, how many people did it employ and of those, (i) how many make a salary of \$100 000 a year or more, (ii) how many make a salary of \$50 000 a year or less?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 1272—**Mr. Brian Jean:**

With regard to Order Paper questions: (a) for questions Q-819 through Q-1259, what is the estimated cost of the government's response to each question; and (b) what is the estimated cost of the government's response to this question?

(Return tabled)

S. O. 52

Question No. 1275—**Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:**

With regard to the participation of the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) in the reality show *Border Security: Canada's Front Line*: (a) what has been the total cost for the Agency's participation in the reality show to date and what is the total cost of the production agreement between CBSA and Force Four Entertainment; (b) how many episodes did CBSA agree to and over what time period will the episodes be filmed; (c) what provisions are in place to ensure that CBSA officers and subjects are not exploited; (d) who reviewed and analyzed the show's proposal and what were their comments; (e) what is the examination and approval process for footage; (f) how are CBSA officers recruited for participation in the show; (g) how many officers have participated in the show and how many have refused to participate in the program and on what grounds; (h) how are subjects recruited for the show; (i) are subjects asked whether or not they would like to participate in the show or are they required to sign a consent form prior to being filmed; (j) are subjects given incentives to participate in the program, either monetary or otherwise, and if so what; (k) has the CBSA received any formal complaints with regards to the show and if so, what was the nature of said complaints and what was CBSA's response; (l) were any concerns raised within CBSA about its participation in the show, and if so, what was the nature of those concerns and from whom did they come; (m) what were the CBSA's stated reasons for participation in the show; (n) what are the established parameters for a case's inclusion in the program; (o) on what grounds will CBSA refuse inclusion of a case; (p) does CBSA have a veto over what footage is aired and, if so, has it been used and for what reasons; and (q) what measures are in place to ensure that the program does not violate the Privacy Act?

(Return tabled)

* * *

[English]

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

REPAYMENT OF SENATE EXPENSES

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of two requests for an emergency debate.

I will hear the hon. member for Winnipeg North first.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise pursuant to Standing Order 52 to request an emergency debate on the issue of the handling of the repayment of Senate expenses by Senator Mike Duffy and the conduct of the officials in the Prime Minister's Office in this process.

This is a very serious situation that has the potential to undermine the confidence Canadians have in their institutions.

The issue raises very troubling questions that have yet to be answered and that merit the immediate attention of the House. We are talking about the most senior official in the Government of Canada, the chief of staff to the Prime Minister, providing a substantial cash gift to a sitting parliamentarian. This raises a whole host of issues in terms of whether this arrangement was fully compliant with the rules of the Senate, the Conflict of Interest Act, the Parliament of Canada Act or the Criminal Code.

There are allegations that Senator Duffy was promised by the Prime Minister's Office that a Senate committee would "go easy on him" if he kept his mouth shut. We are talking here about the executive branch of government paying a parliamentarian to stay quiet and, in return, promising an outcome in an independent Senate committee. This is extremely serious.

The Criminal Code is clear. Paying a public official to undertake a certain action is bribery or corruption. The facts in this case are that the most senior adviser to the Prime Minister paid a senator \$90,000 and had a Senate report altered, and then the Prime Minister's Office

ordered that senator to keep his mouth shut and not participate in an external audit. This order was followed.

There are so many unanswered questions. The Prime Minister's Office has stated that the Prime Minister was aware of the agreement but did not know "the specifics" or "the means".

What was the Prime Minister made aware of, and when was he made aware?

Under what authority was the Prime Minister's chief of staff able to promise Senator Duffy a certain outcome in a supposedly independent Senate report?

When did the Prime Minister become aware that the funds Senator Duffy was paying back were not in fact his own? Why did he allow Senator Duffy, his spokesperson and his Senate leader to keep up the pretence that they were?

There can be no more important issue for the House of Commons than ensuring the integrity of our parliamentary institutions. It is for this reason that the House must debate this issue and must get to the bottom of it so that Canadians can have trust in their institutions.

[Translation]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, on the same topic.

• (1815)

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the official opposition's motion also calls for an emergency debate on the Senate scandal and on the involvement of the Prime Minister's former chief of staff in repaying what were likely fraudulent expense claims made by a Conservative senator appointed by the Prime Minister.

Many years ago, Shakespeare wrote that, "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark." I think the same thing is happening on the other side of Parliament. There is a bad smell, and it seems to be coming from the Prime Minister's Office and back rooms.

Now is the time for some real housecleaning, which was not done, despite the Conservatives' broken promises to be an honest government with integrity, after what we saw with the Liberals' scandals. The Senate has become a refuge for party hacks and people who financially support the political party. It is no big deal if a Conservative candidate loses an election. He will be rewarded with a Senate appointment.

Today, senators are helping themselves to money, facing allegations of fraud over their primary and secondary residences and being reimbursed. When they are caught red-handed, they call on their Conservative buddies, who pay back the money from their deep pockets.

So many rules have been broken here that it is time for parliamentarians to be able to talk about it. Unfortunately, we do not get answers from the government during question period. Unfortunately, the Prime Minister does not seem to be available to answer questions from the media and journalists. Once he made his speech, he ran out the door to hop on a plane and flee the country.

Government Orders

Parliamentarians have a job to do. The police should also have a job to do to shed light on what happened with these housing allowance payments. We need clear, specific and strict rules. This money belongs to taxpayers and the public. People who call open-line shows are furious. They are sick of the scandals from this Conservative government. This was the last straw.

We need a forum. We need to be able to discuss this. That is why the NDP is moving this motion. We want to hold an emergency debate on the Senate scandal and on the involvement of the Prime Minister's Office. We need to get to the bottom of this. It has gone on long enough.

[*English*]

The Speaker: I did not receive a notice from the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands.

These requests for emergency debates are not debatable. Does she have a different point of order?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, no, I was hoping to provide additional support. I apologize, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I appreciate the hon. member for Winnipeg North and the hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie for raising this issue. However, I am not satisfied that it meets the test of the standing order for emergency debates.

The hon. member for Scarborough—Agincourt on a point of order.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you. You said it does not meet the test. I was wondering if you could elaborate on what you mean by not meeting the test.

We in this House are concerned by what reeks on the other side.

I was just wondering what you meant by it does not meet the test. Would you please elaborate and explain for the layman to understand.

The Speaker: The hon. member for Scarborough—Agincourt may know that these questions are not debatable, nor do they require the Speaker to elaborate on all the reasons why he or she determines a decision. I found it did not meet the test.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

TECHNICAL TAX AMENDMENTS ACT, 2012

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-48, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act, the Excise Tax Act, the Federal-Provincial Fiscal Arrangements Act, the First Nations Goods and Services Tax Act and related legislation, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

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

• (1820)

Hon. Lisa Raitt (for the Minister of Finance) moved that the bill be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (for the Minister of Finance) moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: On debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue.

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to begin third and final reading at debate stage of this important piece of legislation for taxpayers and tax professionals, Bill C-48, the Technical Tax Amendments Act, 2012.

I have to admit that it is certainly not the most riveting or the most exciting piece of legislation that has ever come before Parliament. However, it is a very important piece of legislation and it is going to go a long way and a significant way toward the goal of simplifying Canada's tax system.

As previous Parliaments' efforts to adopt these technical tax amendments were unsuccessful for a variety of reasons, we have seen a considerable backlog develop over the years, making it more important now to act and to finally pass these technical tax amendments.

We all recall even the Auditor General of Canada recently cautioning over a growing concern, and outlining that concern in a 2009 report. She said:

Taxpayers' ability to comply with tax legislation depends on their understanding of how the rules apply to their own circumstances. ... Uncertainty about how the law should be applied can also add to the time taken and costs incurred by tax audits and tax administration.

Of course, I could not agree more with the comments from the Auditor General. Furthermore, I would also like to flag that the Auditor General also made some important observations about the impact of not dealing with this issue in a timely manner, an impact with far-reaching implications.

Among the many negative effects for taxpayers of the uncertainty over the backlog of outstanding income tax amendments, the Auditor General's report identified:

higher costs of obtaining professional advice to comply with tax law; less efficiency in doing business transactions; inability of publicly traded corporations to use proposed tax changes in their financial reporting, because they have not been "substantively enacted"; ...and increased willingness to use aggressive tax plans.

Business of Supply

Before continuing, let me pause here to thank my colleagues on the finance committee from all sides for their timely and swift consideration of the technical tax amendments, 2012, earlier this year. I also want to thank them for giving their unanimous support to the legislation. It is little wonder, as during the multiple hearings the finance committee held, we heard from dozens of witnesses ranging from the Certified General Accountants Association of Canada to the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants to the Canadian Tax Foundation, and many more. They were all calling for the timely implementation of today's legislation.

Permit me to share with the House and with all Canadians some snippets of what we heard at committee, all underlining the lengthy process to get this legislation to this stage and the importance of Parliament finally adopting it.

First, allow me to quote from the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants, which said:

Bill C-48 marks the end of a very long road, one with many twists and turns over the years. The last technical bill on income tax received royal assent in 2001....

That speaks for itself. It was a long time ago. They continued to say:

...it is fair to say that we greet the technical tax amendments act of 2012 with a sense of relief. We support Bill C-48. The CICA understands how important it is for taxpayers to have greater certainty and a clearer understanding of Canada's federal income tax system.

We listened to the Canadian Tax Foundation, and again I will quote at length. The CTA said:

We live in a rapidly changing world, and this legislation must respond dynamically to changes in commercial transactions. Can you imagine how much work would be required if you made no repairs to your home or your car for more than 10 years? That is what has happened with these two statutes. The last bill addressing technical amendments was passed in 2001. ... [The Technical Tax Amendments Act, 2012] represents 10 years of repairs and maintenance in updating the Income Tax Act and the Excise Tax Act. Its passage is important to all Canadians. ... I want to emphasize it again. Its passage is very important to all Canadians. ... Delays in the passage of tax legislation leave taxpayers and their advisers in a no man's land of uncertainty. My message for the Standing Committee on Finance is that you should encourage passage of this legislation....

• (1825)

I will give the House another example. The Certified General Accountant's Association of Canada told finance committee:

...we encourage you to move swiftly to pass this important piece of legislation. The bill deals with a massive backlog of unlegislated tax measures. Its passage would, in our opinion, bring greater clarity to the tax system and strengthen the integrity of our laws.

We all know these delayed technical amendments cause serious difficulties for taxpayers, businesses, professional accountants and their clients, and of course, government. We heard some very vocal support for the technical tax amendments act, 2012 at finance committee from these and many other public interest organizations and tax professionals. The support was a big part of the reason the legislation received unanimous support from all members, from all parties, on the committee.

For those watching at home, and parliamentarians, I want to briefly recap the content of the technical tax amendments act, 2012. As I alluded to earlier, the vast majority of these amendments have already been publicly released in either a previous budget or a previous technical tax bill. In addition to that, the vast majority of it was previously and extensively released prior to introduction during

the multiple public consultation phases. The ultimate legislation, in point of fact, incorporates a tremendous amount of the feedback provided by Canadians during those many public consultations.

Today's act, among other things, would further simplify Canada's tax system through numerous technical amendments to the Income Tax Act, the Excise Tax Act and related legislation. I would like to further add that today's legislation also takes key steps to close some tax loopholes to create a stronger and fairer tax system for all Canadians.

I want to quickly review the legislation, part by part, to highlight some key measures and what they hope to achieve. Even though today's act is obviously extremely technical in nature and includes seven different sections, I will keep my remarks brief.

I will commence with Part 1 of the bill, which would modify the Income Tax Act by taking into account comments we received during our extensive consultations and which would create simpler rules for non-resident trusts.

Parts 2 and 3 deal directly with the taxation of Canadian multinational corporations with foreign affiliates, implementing changes, some of which date all the way back to 2004, that would make Canada's tax system more fair and equitable, and of course, easier to administer. As is the case with the majority of measures contained in the bill, these changes, again, are the result of extensive public consultations.

Part 4 of the bill deals with the concept of bijuralism. More specifically, it contains amendments that will ensure that the bill will function effectively under both common and civil law. This means that amendments dealing with certain legal concepts, such as rights, interest, real and personal property, life estate and remainder interest, tangible and intangible property, and joint and several liability, will accurately capture common and civil law in both official languages.

Part 5 of the bill is designed with fairness for taxpayers in mind and sets out to close tax loopholes to ensure that Canadians would carry their fair share. The act would close tax loopholes related to specified leasing property, ensure that conversion as specified investment flow through trusts and partnerships into corporations are subject to the same rules as transactions through corporations—

* * *

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

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

The House resumed from May 9 consideration of the motion, and of the amendment.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the amendment to the motion relating to the business of supply. I would advise the hon. parliamentary secretary that she will have approximately 10 and a half minutes when this debate resumes.

Call in the members.

•(1855)

(The House divided on the amendment, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 682)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bennett
Bevington	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Borg	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brison
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Comartin
Côté	Cotler
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseault	Easter
Foote	Fortin
Freeman	Garneau
Genest	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Groguhé
Harris (St. John's East)	Hsu
Hughes	Jacob
Julian	Karygiannis
Kellway	Lamoureaux
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mulcair	Murray
Nantel	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Patry
Péclet	Perreault
Pilon	Plamondon
Quach	Rankin
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sellah	Sgro
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaiesan	St-Denis
Stewart	Sullivan
Toone	Trudeau
Turmel	Valerioté — 116

NAYS

Members

Adams	Adler
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin

Business of Supply

Baird	Bateman
Benoit	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Holder
James	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Leaf
Leitch	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	O'Connor
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	O'Toole
Paradis	Poilievre
Preston	Raitt
Rajotte	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shory	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Toews	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Tweed	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer — 146

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the amendment defeated.

The next question is on the main motion.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Business of Supply

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

• (1905)

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

(Division No. 683)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bennett
Bevington	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Borg	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brison
Brousseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Comartin
Côté	Cotler
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseau	Easter
Foote	Fortin
Freeman	Garneau
Genest	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Groguhé
Harris (St. John's East)	Hsu
Hughes	Jacob
Julian	Karygiannis
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Énard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	May
McCallum	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Mulcair
Murray	Nantel
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Patry	Pécllet
Perreault	Pilon
Plamondon	Quach
Rankin	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sellah
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaesan
St-Denis	Stewart
Sullivan	Toone

Trudeau
Valeriote— 117

Tumel

NAYS

Members

Adams	Adler
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Benoit	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Flaherty
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Holder
James	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Leaf
Leitch	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	O'Connor
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	O'Toole
Paradis	Poilievre
Preston	Raitt
Rajotte	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shory	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Toews	Trost
Trotter	Truppe
Tweed	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer— 146

Government Orders

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

* * *

NUCLEAR TERRORISM ACT

The House resumed from May 10 consideration of the motion that Bill S-9, an act to amend the Criminal Code, be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion of the third reading stage of Bill S-9.

Hon. Gordon O'Connor: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it I believe you would find agreement to apply the results of the previous motion to the current motion, with the Conservatives voting yes.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Translation]

Ms. Nicole Turmel: Mr. Speaker, we agree to apply the vote and the NDP will vote in favour of the motion.

[English]

Ms. Judy Foote: Mr. Speaker, the Liberals agree to apply and will vote yes.

[Translation]

Mr. Louis Plamondon: Mr. Speaker, the Bloc is in favour of the motion.

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, the Green Party will be voting yes.

Mr. Peter Goldring: Mr. Speaker, I will be voting yes.

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

(Division No. 684)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Adler
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Welland)
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Andrews	Angus
Armstrong	Ashfield
Ashton	Aspin
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Baird
Bateman	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bennett
Benoit	Bergen
Bernier	Bevington
Bezan	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Blaney
Block	Boivin
Borg	Boughen
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brisson	Brousseau
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)

Brown (Barrie)	Butt
Byrne	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Caron
Carrie	Casey
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Chisu	Chong
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Clarke
Clement	Comartin
Côté	Cotler
Crockatt	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Daniel	Davidson
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Dreeshen	Dubé
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseault	Dykstra
Easter	Fantino
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Flaherty
Fletcher	Foote
Fortin	Freeman
Galipeau	Gallant
Gameau	Genest
Giguère	Gill
Glover	Godin
Goguen	Goldring
Goodale	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Gravelle	Grewal
Groguié	Harris (St. John's East)
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Holder	Hsu
Hughes	Jacob
James	Jean
Julian	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Karygiannis	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kellway	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lamoureaux
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	Lauzon
Laverdière	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leaf	Leitch
Lemieux	Leslie
Leung	Liu
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	Mayes
McCallum	McColeman
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	McLeod
Menegakis	Menzies
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Mulcair
Murray	Nantel
Nicholls	Nicholson
Nunez-Melo	O'Connor
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	O'Toole
Pacetti	Papillon
Paradis	Paty
Péclet	Perreault
Pilon	Plamondon
Pollievre	Preston
Quach	Raitt
Rajotte	Rankin
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rousseau	Sagamash
Sandhu	Saxton

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Scott	Seeback
Sellah	Sgro
Shea	Shory
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Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaiesan	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	St-Denis
Stewart	Storseth
Strahl	Sullivan
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Toews
Toone	Trost
Trottier	Trudeau
Truppe	Turmel
Tweed	Uppal
Valcourt	Valeriotte
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
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NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

● (1910)

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

HUMAN RESOURCES, SKILLS AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the concurrence motion.

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

(Division No. 685)

YEAS

Members

Adams	Adler
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Benoit	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Brown (Barrie)
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie

Chisu
Clarke
Crockatt
Davidson
Del Mastro
Dreeshen
Dykstra
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Fletcher
Gallant
Goguen
Goodyear
Gourde
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Holder
Jean
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Leaf
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Mayes
McLeod
Menzies
Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)
O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Poillievre
Raitt
Rathgeber
Rempel
Saxton
Seeback
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
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

Chong
Clement
Daniel
Dechert
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Fantino
Flaherty
Galipeau
Gill
Goldring
Gosal
Grewal
Hawn
Hiebert
James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenny (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
McColeman
Menegakis
Merrifield
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Nicholson
Oliver
Opitz
Paradis
Preston
Rajotte
Reid
Richards
Schellenberger
Shea
Smith
Sorenson
Storseth
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Toet
Trost
Truppe
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer— 146

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Bellavance	Bennett
Bevington	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Borg	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brison
Brousseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Comartin
Côté	Cotler
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly

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Dubé	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseau	Easter
Footé	Fortin
Freeman	Garneau
Genest	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Grogoué
Harris (St. John's East)	Hsu
Hughes	Jacob
Julian	Karygiannis
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	May
McCallum	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Mulcair
Murray	Nantel
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Patry	Péclet
Perreault	Pilon
Plamondon	Quach
Rankin	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sellah
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
St-Denis	Stewart
Sullivan	Toone
Trudeau	Turmel
Valériote — 117	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

● (1920)

[English]

AIRPORT SECURITY

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to pursue a question I first asked on February 15, which is in relation to the loss of RCMP services at a number of class 2 airports in British Columbia and elsewhere. The response I got from the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety at the time was that the deployment of RCMP assets was an operational decision of the RCMP and not related to a decision of this particular administration.

It is a loss for the airport in Victoria, which is actually in Sidney, B.C. in my riding. The presence of these RCMP officers was enormously helpful. With dedicated RCMP officers at the Victoria airport, there was coverage seven days a week. Now if there are problems at the airport, the local RCMP detachment based in Sidney would have to juggle other calls and demands in order to come to the

airport. It is a busy airport and the RCMP presence was very important for security.

As well, the RCMP presence was withdrawn from Kelowna. Although Kelowna is in quite a spectacularly beautiful part of Canada, in the Okanagan, it happens to be, according to security experts with whom I have consulted, something of a thoroughfare for the smuggling of drugs and weapons. It is in an area where there are significant markets in northern Alberta and, without the RCMP detachment at the Kelowna airport, there is a concern that there will be an increase in drug dealing and other offences.

This comes at the same time as significant cutbacks in border security agents. According to the union representing the border guards, the Canada Border Services Agency has had cuts of up to 1,000 people. A lot of us saw the news coverage of the loss of the canine division, which was very efficient, effective and accurate at detecting the presence of illicit drugs and narcotics and so forth at borders. We have lost the canine division, we have lost the workforce of Canada Border Services agents who worked with that canine force, and we are losing security along the Canada-U.S. border at the same time that these cutbacks at the RCMP have lost us protection in our airports.

I have to say that I find this rather baffling, coming from an administration that has fashioned itself as being tough on crime and as being one that wants to protect Canada and Canadians from the threats of violent crime and the threats of illegal and illicit activity. This is in fact not just affecting particularly the Canada Border Services agents, not just affecting so-called backroom arrangements, agents and operations, but actually will affect the front-line operations of border security agents in such a way that the president of the union feels that smugglers will get the upper hand.

It really would be appropriate for the federal government to revisit these ill-advised cuts and to restore and replace the presence of RCMP officers in the class 2 airports, such as in Victoria and in Kelowna, and at the same time to revisit the cutting of border security agents. These are ill-conceived cuts that will cause far more damage through the loss of security than they can possibly gain in austerity.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, Infrastructure and Communities and for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands for providing me with the opportunity to respond to some of her concerns. Like other police services across Canada, the RCMP in British Columbia provides on-site policing at airports. Airport security in Canada is designated into three tiers across the country.

Tier 1 includes larger airports with policing detachments such as Toronto, Montreal, Calgary, Vancouver and similar other larger centres. The policing detachment in each tier 1 airport is provided by the police of the jurisdiction in that municipality where the airport is located.

Tier 2 airports are located in medium-sized municipalities that include cities like Kelowna or Victoria.

Adjournment Proceedings

Tier 3 airports are located in small communities across Canada and do not have dedicated police presence as part of their security measures.

Security assessment of all airports is a continuous effort of Transport Canada.

• (1925)

[*Translation*]

The funding for airport security measures is paid directly by Transport Canada to the airport authorities and the municipality.

[*English*]

The RCMP provision of policing services under contract is conducted through co-operation with the municipality and the chief operating officer in each airport.

Total security operations for each airport include various measures, for example, perimeter fencing, employee security passes and controlled access zones. Budget allocations by Transport Canada are based on the assessment to determine the risks and need for security at each airport.

In 2012, Transport Canada estimated that existing security measures as a whole at tier 2 airports, including Kelowna and Victoria, other than dedicated police officers and detachments, were sufficient to ensure public safety at these airports.

We have confidence in Transport Canada's assessment that the overall security package at Canadian airports, including Kelowna and Victoria, provide maximum security and safety measures for all Canadians. Let me assure the House that the policing presence at Kelowna and Victoria airports is ongoing through routine patrols and by responding to all emergency 911 calls for service.

With that being said, I thank the member for her query and I now anticipate her follow-up.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, certainly when we lost the RCMP presence at the Victoria airport, the Victoria Airport Authority said it found the presence of the RCMP extremely important to the airport. It is hard to quantify the benefit of having officers present because, as the airport authority officials noted at the time in the *Times Colonist*, their mere presence at the airport may in fact have offset and prevented crimes from occurring.

With all respect to the hon. parliamentary secretary, I suggest to him that his three tiers are not enough. We have to have airport security as a priority and border security as a priority. When the unions that represent border service agents say they think smugglers will get the upper hand, Canadians should be worried.

When the RCMP officers are pulled from our airports for austerity reasons, I think we should all be concerned. It is a small amount of prudence for a large amount of benefit.

Mr. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the RCMP as the police of jurisdiction will continue a police presence at the Kelowna and Victoria airports with routine patrols and in response to 911 emergency calls for service. I assure the member that the RCMP is well equipped, well trained and well positioned to continue to carry out this essential function. We will support our national police force in so doing.

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Order. Pursuant to Standing Order 81(4), the motion to adjourn the House is deemed to have been withdrawn, and the House will now go into committee of the whole for the purpose of considering votes under Natural Resources in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014.

[*English*]

I will now leave the chair for the House to resolve itself into Committee of the Whole.

[*For continuation of proceedings see part B*]

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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Tuesday, May 21, 2013
(Part B)

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Tuesday, May 21, 2013

[Continuation of proceedings from part A]

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

• (1930)

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

NATURAL RESOURCES—MAIN ESTIMATES, 2013-14

(Consideration in committee of the whole of all votes under Natural Resources in the main estimates, Mr. Joe Comartin in the chair)

The Chair: Tonight's debate is a general one on all of the votes under Natural Resources. Each member will be allocated 15 minutes.

The first round will begin with the official opposition, followed by the government and then the Liberal Party. After that, we will follow the usual proportional rotation.

As provided in the motion adopted earlier today, parties may use each 15-minute slot for speeches or questions and answers by one or more of their members. In the case of speeches, members of the party to which the period is allotted may speak one after the other.

The Chair would appreciate it if the first member speaking in each slot would indicate how the time will be used, particularly if it is to be shared.

[Translation]

When the time is to be used for questions and answers, the Chair will expect that the minister's response will reflect approximately the time taken by the question. Members need not be in their own seats to be recognized.

I also wish to indicate that in committee of the whole, all remarks should be addressed through the Chair, and I ask for everyone's cooperation in upholding the standards of parliamentary language and behaviour.

[English]

Finally, I would remind hon. members that according to the motion adopted earlier today, during the evening's debate no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair.

[Translation]

We may now begin tonight's session.

[English]

The House, in committee of the whole, pursuant to Standing Order 81(4)(a), the second appointed day, consideration in committee of the whole of all votes under Natural Resources in the main estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014.

The hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Chair, I would like to let you know right off the bat that I will be using my full 15 minutes for questions. We have lots of questions.

I will start with the minister. The information from the Parliamentary Budget Officer's integrated monitoring database shows that by the third quarter of the last fiscal year the department had spent 108% of its budget for internal services, the so-called back office expenses.

Can the minister tell us what the total amount of overspending on back office services was in the last fiscal year, and if money is being used from these estimates to cover the gap?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Chair, I am very pleased to point out that we are the first government in Canadian history to reduce our greenhouse gas emissions. Canada is now halfway towards our goal of reducing emissions by 17% by 2020.

While our economy grew over the last six years, our emissions have decreased. Expanded protection of parks in Canada has been increased by 50%. We have created the world's largest freshwater protected area, Lake Superior. We have expanded Canada's green conservation area by over 10 times. We have increased pipeline inspections and audits. New fines have been imposed for companies that break environmental laws. We have strengthened—

The Chair: Minister, the time allocated for your speech has to correspond with roughly the same length as what was received from the questioner. We will go back to the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, I hope the minister does not continue to not respond to a very simple question that he should be capable of answering.

I will give him an easier question. What is the department's budget for advertising for the 2013-14 fiscal year? I would like a response, not a speech.

Business of Supply

• (1935)

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, this is a critical moment in the development of our natural resources, and therefore we have allocated a significant amount of money for advertising. Under vote 1, the main estimates for this year, the number is \$16.5 million.

It is common practice for governments to use advertising and public information to communicate with Canadians. Providing Canadians with the facts helps them to make informed decisions. This is a fact-based ad.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, he has taken more time than should have been allotted, but I thank him for at least for answering that.

The question I want to ask now is, how much of an increase in advertising spending does that represent over 2012-13?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, these numbers, of course, are in the main estimates of 2012-13, and as the member opposite fully knows, it is \$9 million.

The issue here, as I mentioned a moment ago, is that this is a critical moment in the development of our natural resources because we are awaiting a decision from the U.S. administration in respect to the Keystone XL pipeline.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, now that the minister has given us the math, does he agree that the department has now increased spending on advertising by almost 7,000% since 2010-11? That is 7,000% since that year.

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, the point I made before seems to be difficult for the member opposite to understand. This campaign will raise awareness of Canada's environmental record and U.S.-Canada shared energy interests. It will challenge and correct misinformation.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, so that is a 7,000% increase since 2010-11.

My next question is very simple. How much money is the department spending on media training for the minister in 2013-14?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, no money has been allocated. I have not taken any of the training and I do not intend to.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, obviously the minister is in error. Is it not true that half a million dollars has been allocated for media training for the minister and senior staff for 2013-14?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, if the member opposite does not want to listen to the answer, at the very least he should listen to his own questions. He was asking the question, as I understood it, about myself as minister, and I gave him that answer.

All the details regarding the advertisements will be published by the government in the annual report on government advertising activities.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, I have now asked the question three times and I am going to ask it again. I would hope that this time the minister will actually answer.

What are the expected outcomes of the projected cost of half a million dollars in media training?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, this is actually a new question. Now we are talking about the outcomes.

The training program for people other than me is designed to help them communicate with the public. Part of that will be training for scientists and staff, not for me. We want our scientists to communicate with the public and to do so in a way that is accessible to the public.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, given the minister's lack of credibility in the media, I think it is fair to say that there are some real problems there.

My next question is, how many communications staff does the department employ and how many of them were hired in the last two years?

• (1940)

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, I am surprised that the member opposite is engaged in such short questions, given his affinity to filibuster. Apparently his 226,000 words of anti-development rhetoric spoken in this House last year were not enough. Not once in that garrulous verbosity did he ever praise the 300—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Order. The hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, it appears the minister is engaging in a filibuster. However, more importantly for taxpayers, he is not answering direct questions on the estimates, which is appalling.

I will now ask the next question, and I hope that he answers.

How many complaints has the department received about increases in advertising expenditures, that 7,000% increase in advertising—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: The hon. Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, sorry, could he repeat the question?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, could the minister tell me how many complaints the department has received about the 7,000% increase in advertising expenditures?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, the premise is wrong. The government is strongly advocating for Canadian jobs and economic growth, and we will continue to defend and promote Canada's interests. Our two nations shared commitment to democracy, free markets and the rule of law underpin why Canada and the United States have the world's most successful relationship. This campaign will raise awareness of Canada's environmental record.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, could the minister tell us how much of the 7,000% increase, the \$16.5 million advertising budget, will be spent in the United States this year?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, this advertising campaign is ongoing, and extensions will be assessed as the campaign continues. Once the campaign is complete, full costs will be available.

Business of Supply

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, the minister is not answering that question either. He does not have a very good track record, so I will give him another question. How much of the \$16.5 million advertising budget for this year will be spent in Europe?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, the details of this ongoing advertising campaign will be made available at the appropriate time.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, that is not very respectful to taxpayers.

When the minister held his March 18 media event on tanker safety, was he aware that an oil spill recovery vessel had run aground on the way to the announcement, that his media event on safety had resulted in an accident?

Mr. Leon Benoit: That does not even warrant an answer.

Hon. Joe Oliver: No, it does not, but I will give the answer, and the answer is no.

Mr. Chair, we have taken significant measures to protect against a spill. This includes requiring trained experts with knowledge of the coast to accompany tanker captains while they navigate to open waters. We have introduced tough new fines for companies that break our environmental laws. Canada has never had a major tanker spill off our coasts. In the unlikely event of a spill—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Order. The hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster.

[Translation]

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, is the minister aware that the Go With Canada website stated that greenhouse gas emissions from the oil sands are falling in Canada, when in fact they are on the rise?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, our government is committed to protecting the environment with respect to climate change, air quality and water conservation. We are protecting Canadians. Our government delivered results for Canada.

• (1945)

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, is the minister aware that the Go With Canada website states that the changes made to the environmental impact assessment process improve environmental protection, when in fact they have resulted in the cancellation of nearly 3,000 environmental assessments?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, our government is committed to many aspects of environmental protection, from climate change and air quality to water conservation and protecting Canadians against harmful chemicals. We have produced results for Canadians.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, what were the criteria and studies used to determine that the department's advertising expenditures should increase by nearly 7,000%?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, I have already answered that question.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, no, the minister did not answer the question.

I will continue anyway. Did department officials meet with representatives from the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers in March 2010 to agree on a communication strategy?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, natural resources create jobs and support economic growth in all regions of Canada. It is common practice for the government to use advertising and public awareness. We are discussing important things with companies, environmental groups and Canadians.

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Chair, he did not answer the question. There were four meetings, according to the registry, that were held in March 2010. Therefore, how many times has the minister or senior officials met with the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers and was energy communications and advertising discussed at these meetings?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, we have consultations with a broad range of Canadians, industry and environmental groups and we discuss the critical issues regarding responsible resource development in our country. That is the way this minister and this ministry inform themselves about the issues that are of concern to the Canadian public. There is an enormous opportunity to develop our resources and we will do so responsibly.

The Assistant Deputy Chair: That brings us to the end of the first 15 minutes allocated. We will continue to the next 15 minutes that go to the Conservative Party.

The hon. Minister of Natural Resources.

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Chair, I welcome this opportunity to discuss our government's commitment to responsible resource development. Canada's resource industries, energy, mining and forestry, are key drivers of the Canadian economy, accounting for \$1.6 million jobs and almost 20% of our GDP. They generate \$30 billion in taxes every year, revenues that help fund health care, education and public pensions. This is a pivotal time for Canada and the actions we take as a country will either set the course for future growth or consign us to watching opportunities pass us by.

[Translation]

Up to 600 major resource projects are under way or planned for the next decade, to the tune of approximately \$650 billion. We are entering a development period comparable to the period during which our national railroads were built.

This truly contributes to building the country. Our government will not miss this wonderful opportunity. We are doing what is needed to ensure that Canada remains one of the most attractive sources of natural resources and investment destinations in the world.

Business of Supply

• (1950)

[English]

Our government recognizes that climate change is a serious global threat and we support urgent action to mitigate its effects. Where we differ with the opposition parties is how to address this important issue.

The NDP seems to suggest that we should stop developing the oil sands and switch to renewable power. Such a policy is not economically feasible and would have dire consequences for our country's standard of living and security. According to the International Energy Agency, even under the most optimistic scenarios for the development of renewable energy, the world will have to rely on fossil fuels for 63% of its energy needs in 25 years. Globally, cutting off oil production would create severe, if not catastrophic, economic hardship, especially for the poorest nations that already suffer from an energy deficit. Indeed, 1.5 billion people are currently without electricity.

Our government believes we can generate economic growth, create jobs and assure prosperity for Canadians for generations to come, and we can do that while protecting the environment. Our plan is working. Without killing jobs or closing businesses, we are reducing emissions.

Ours is one of the first governments to grow the economy at the same time that we are reducing emissions. From 1995 to 2011, our economy grew by 8.4%, while emissions fell by 4.8%. Rather than strand our resources and relinquish our legacy, we have invested in research and development that makes resource development cleaner and greener. We have done that in coordination with our provincial partners, Canadian and international scientists and industry. We have provided incentives for consumers and businesses to enhance energy efficiency to make for a sustainable greener future.

The oil sands represent one one-thousand of global GHG emissions. Their development would not mean game over for the planet. We are continuing to reduce emissions, with a 26% reduction per barrel since 1990.

[Translation]

We estimate that we are halfway toward achieving our objective of reducing our greenhouse gas emissions by 17%. International statistics from the United States Energy Information Administration show that, between 2005 and 2011, Canada reduced its emissions by 11.4%, compared to 8.5% in the United States, 9.9% in Japan, and 7.9% in Europe.

[English]

Canada can be proud to be one of the only oil producing countries that have strong environmental protections.

[Translation]

The challenges facing Canada's energy resources are clear and urgent. The sole client for our oil and gas resources is the United States. In the short term, that has led to a drop in prices, which has meant a loss of some \$20 billion in revenue for the Canadian economy. In the medium term, our pipeline capacity is becoming insufficient, which risks wasting our resources.

In the long term, the United States will develop its own vast shale gas and oil reserves. That is why Canada must strategically diversify its markets, which means building the infrastructure we need to transport our resources to the ocean so they can be shipped out.

To meet this challenge, our government is seeking new markets and, in principle, is supporting the construction of pipelines to the southwest and east. We have also modernized our regulatory approval process, strengthened our environmental reviews and increased consultations with aboriginal groups.

[English]

In contrast, we have from the NDP incoherence and contradiction and support for foreign commentators who claim our resources are a curse and that it would be game over for the climate if we developed our oil sands which represent one one-thousand of global emissions. From the Liberal leader, these attacks on Canada are greeted by deafening silence.

The plan of the New Democrats is as clear as mud. While they claim they support the development of the oil sands, all indications are to the contrary. They oppose northern gateway before a review is complete. The NDP leader is also opposed to Kinder Morgan's Trans Mountain pipeline, saying that they cannot say "yes" to a project by Kinder Morgan. They opposed Keystone XL and flew to Washington to lobby against the approval of a project that would create hundreds of thousands of Canadian jobs.

• (1955)

[Translation]

The NDP claims to be in favour of a west-to-east pipeline, but now it is opposing the reversal of line 9B. The NDP said that we cannot reverse the flow of Enbridge's pipeline 9.

[English]

When he was speaking in English, the leader of the NDP said a west to east pipeline was:

—the type of pro-business common sense solution that not only creates jobs—it strengthens Canada's energy security and will leave more to future generations than just debt.

This blatant contradiction, policy incoherence and opposing messages in different regions of the country undermines the vestiges of his credibility, while it does nothing to help our government sell its message to foreign countries. Similarly, it would be helpful for the Liberal Party to show some courage and start to support policies that advance the national interests.

Our government is taking action on climate change, while promoting Canada abroad and creating jobs and economic growth at home.

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Chair, it is a great pleasure to be here tonight.

Business of Supply

I thank the minister for the speech on the importance of resource development to Canada's economy and particularly on how we are proceeding while protecting the environment. He has made it crystal clear the very stark contrast of our approach versus the NDP, whose members, we would argue, have abandoned our Canadian workers with their anti-development rhetoric and anti-development stance.

I am fortunate to come from my home province of Saskatchewan where we have a very strong resource sector with oil, potash and uranium production. These jobs are crucial to the Saskatchewan economy, which has been incredibly strong over the last few years. They have been incredibly important to the national economy because we have been able to provide some of the stability that has gone toward carrying us through the crises of the last few years.

However, throughout my time as a member of Parliament, businesses, municipalities and people in my riding have told me that the development of our resources have been held hostage to an environmental review system that does not balance our needs.

Last year our government introduced important legislation in this regard called "responsible resource development". Could the minister take a few minutes tonight to tell us in the House how this legislation balances the need to protect the environment, while also ensuring that we have a review system that is not cumbersome or inefficient?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, the parliamentary secretary's question is very important and relevant.

Responsible resource development is a critical piece of legislation that makes reviews more timely, reduces duplication, strengthens environmental protection and enhances aboriginal consultations. Prior to our plan, thousands of projects with little or no environmental effect were being reviewed and reviews would take far too long, which resulted in a weaker economy and less jobs for Canadians. We accomplished this improvement, while ensuring that the environment was protected.

Our government is focusing valuable resources on projects with the largest possible environmental impact, while increasing pipeline and tanker safety. Indeed, in the main estimates for the National Energy Board before this chamber right now there is new funding to hire more pipeline inspectors to increase our pipeline safety. While the opposition would like to mislead the Canadian public by saying that we cannot both protect the environment and create jobs, our government will take a balanced approach that ensures we do both.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Chair, I thank the minister for the explanation on how important that legislation is to Canada.

I note that the NDP members have been very clear that they are opposed to resource development. They have been clear in the House that they stand against basically any type of resource development. However, one area of particular importance to me, especially being from Saskatchewan, is their notion, their theory, of Dutch disease.

The premier in my home province of Saskatchewan was very public about his disagreement with the leader of the NDP when he called resource jobs a disease. We are all familiar with his position on that. The leader of the NDP then called Premier Wall a messenger for the Prime Minister.

While completely lacking respect for the elected leader of Saskatchewan, more broadly it showed that the leader of the NDP had no understanding of how important this sector was to the Canadian economy. Particularly, he did not understand how important it was to the western Canadian economy.

Could the minister explain our position on the resource sector and whether he believes it is creating Dutch disease across Canada?

• (2000)

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, the NDP has never been known for clear economic thinking. The Dutch disease theory has been debunked by economic history and by economists across Canada, including The Macdonald-Laurier Institute and the former governor of the Bank of Canada, Mark Carney.

The crux of the NDP's argument is the supposed impact on the manufacturing sector. Of course, if the NDP had spoken to the manufacturing sector, it might have heard that resource development actually helps Canada's manufacturing industry. Let us listen for a second to what the Canadian Manufacturers & Exporters had to say: "The fact is that all Canadians stand to benefit in very real ways from the wealth created by these developments".

However, the biggest issue with the New Democrats' theory is the hundreds of thousands of jobs created by these developments, many of them union jobs. For example, Canada's Building Trades Unions, a union representing around 200,000 workers in our energy sector, says that the NDP would be very bad for workers and the entire Canadian economy.

I wonder when the leader of the NDP will finally admit to his erroneous economics, seek forgiveness, and support the hundreds of thousands of Canadians employed in our resource sector.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Chair, the Liberals admitted that they failed to get the job done. The NDP has told us that it wants to bring in a \$23-billion carbon tax. Perhaps the minister could take a few minutes to talk a bit about the accomplishments of our government since we came to power.

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, there is not enough time to do all of that, but let me focus on a few matters.

Our government has created the largest freshwater protected area. We have expanded Canada's marine conservation area by over 10 times. We have increased pipeline inspections and audits. We have imposed new fines for companies that break environmental laws. We have strengthened tanker inspections. We require double hulls for large tankers. We have improved aids for navigation, including updated charts for shipping routes. We have invested in scientific research in marine pollution, and we have invested some \$10 billion in green energy, in alternative energy, and in reducing the energy footprint of conventional and non-conventional energy expansion.

Business of Supply

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I welcome the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Liberal Party and to ask the Minister of Natural Resources some questions this evening. My focus will be primarily on asking questions.

Being the Minister of Natural Resources is a challenging task. Not only does the minister have to oversee the development of Canada's natural resources, but because natural resources can have consequences when they are developed, he must also show that he has a keen understanding of the consequences that can occur if these resources are not developed in a sustainable manner.

I have to admit that in recent weeks, on his trips to the United States and Europe, he has certainly raised eyebrows with respect to the things he has said with regard to climate change, raising questions about whether he really understands the subject very clearly. I am going to be asking him some questions about that, but first I want to get back to a question my colleague from the NDP tried to ask him three times, unsuccessfully. It concerned the fact that there is on MERX a request for services for a contract of up to half a million dollars. If I may quote from it, it says that "NRCan will acquire the required media relations training for the Minister and senior NRCan officials". It is understandable that my colleague got confused, because it does actually say "the Minister".

I would like to ask the minister whether his intention is to avail himself of any of that half a million dollars to do some media training.

• (2005)

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, this is an historic moment. It is the first time since I was appointed minister almost two years ago that a Liberal natural resources critic has risen to ask me a question in the House. Now that it has finally happened, I had hoped it would be a matter of some moment. Alas, my hopes are dashed. In fact, he is not off to an auspicious start.

The question was already asked. The question was answered. The fact is that I have not and I will not avail myself of that service.

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, as an aside, it probably would not be a bad idea if the minister did avail himself of some of that training, but I digress.

Let me point out that the minister recently answered a letter written by 12 scientists, and I want to quote from it. In his answer, he said:

Domestically, we have taken action to reduce our GHG emissions and estimate that, as a result of collective action to date, we are already halfway towards closing the gap between the original projections for 2020 and where we need to be to meet our 17 per cent Copenhagen Accord target.

It is not the first time he has said it. He has said it many, many times, as has the Minister of the Environment. To begin with, what is the target, in megatonnes, for 2020 the government has set itself?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, it is 611 megatonnes.

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, I thank the minister for that answer. The last time we had available figures for Canada's production of greenhouse gases was in 2011. It says so on the sites, and that number was 702 megatonnes. Now, if we are halfway toward our 2020 targets, we should be in the area of about 670 megatonnes at this time. That is how the math works out.

Does the minister know where we are now? I would like to understand that, because he and the Minister of the Environment have not stopped making claims that they are halfway to the target set for 2020, which is 17% under the 2005 target. How does the minister know that they are there, and can he tell us what the levels are now? It should be around 670, or less, if he is actually telling Canadians the right answer.

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, our collective actions to date will bring us halfway toward closing the gap between what our emissions had originally been projected to be in 2020 and where we need to be to meet our Copenhagen target.

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, I think the minister said this time that it "will bring us" halfway, which is different from saying that they are halfway. We should be able to see right now, if the government claims that it is halfway, that it knows that we are at or below 670 megatonnes now. Can he give me a straight answer, please?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, frankly, I find it a bit rich to be attacked on this issue by the Liberal Party, which signed us on to an international agreement that it had no intention of complying with and that it did not comply with. During their tenure, the result was an increase in greenhouse gas emissions by, I believe, some 30%. We do not have to listen to belated comments from the members of the Liberal Party. The apologies are belated, and we are still waiting for them.

• (2010)

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, I do not think I am going to get an answer about how we are halfway to our 2020 targets, but let me ask another question. Can the minister tell us what share of the progress that has been made is due to the provinces, as distinct from federal government action?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, our obligation is an obligation for the country, and that means that we all have to collaborate together. The natural resources sector is an area of shared jurisdiction, and in the case of the environment, it is directly shared, so of course, we expect and are receiving co-operative action from the provinces, and we are doing our part.

The emissions, as I said, from 2005 to 2011, fell by 4.8%, while the economy grew by—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Order, please. We still have to try to work on getting the response time similar to the time taken for the answer as close as we can.

The hon. member for Westmount—Ville-Marie.

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, that was a non-answer.

Let me say that I have also witnessed a first this evening. This is the first time the Conservatives have actually acknowledged that it is a team effort. They did not tell us how much the provinces have contributed, but up until now, for the past number of years, they have made it sound as if it has been only through their efforts that the actual numbers have been reduced. I am not even talking about the slowdown in the economy. It is the first time there has been some kind of recognition that the provinces are also playing a role in this.

Business of Supply

Let me go on to my next question. Canada has the opportunity to be a world leader. The Conservative government claims that it is a world leader in renewable energy. Why is it that the government is missing the opportunity, with its staggering \$328 million in cuts to clean energy funding? For example, there is \$162 million cut from the clean energy fund and \$60 million cut from the ecoENERGY for biofuels fund. There is \$59 million cut from the grant for Sustainable Development Technology Canada for next generation biofuels.

How is it that the government is able to go down to the United States and to Europe and say that it is taking all sorts of responsible actions, when it is cutting the programs that are intended to develop the clean energy sources we need to have in this country?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, Canada is a recognized leader in clean energy and energy efficiency. For example, the International Energy Agency ranks Canada as second only to Germany, among 16 countries, in its rate of energy efficiency improvement from 1990 to 2008. Since 2006, our government has invested more than \$10 billion to reduce emissions and to protect our environment through investments in green infrastructure, energy technologies, clean energy and the production of cleaner energy and cleaner fuels. These investments increase our competitiveness globally and create jobs for Canada.

Our government's clean energy investments contribute to our goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 17%. With respect specifically to energy efficiency, we have shown strong leadership. In 2015, energy performance standards will be in place for 55 appliances and equipment used in Canadian homes and businesses. This is expected to save an estimated 48 megatonnes of greenhouse gases annually by the end of this decade. In 2011, our government announced \$195 million over five years to continue its momentum in improving energy efficiency in Canada.

It is this type of action that will assist in meeting our greenhouse gas emission targets.

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, the government likes to talk about its sector-by-sector approach, and it has indeed brought in a couple of initiatives, one dealing with car exhaust emissions and the other dealing with coal-fired generating stations. The big one, because it is the one that is most susceptible to our not being able to reach our 2020 targets is, of course, the sector dealing with oil and gas. We have been waiting for a long time for this one, and it is really the elephant in the tent.

Can the government tell us on what date the government will introduce its long-delayed oil and gas regulations under its sector-by-sector approach? Is there funding from the minister's department involved in the implementation of the regulations?

• (2015)

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, I am pleased that the member opposite recognizes the significant progress we have made in the transportation sector, which makes up 24% of Canada's emissions.

In October 2010, light-duty vehicle regulations for model years 2010 to 2016 came into force, establishing a common Canada-U.S. standard. In November 2012, Canada announced regulations to improve fuel efficiency and to reduce GHG emissions from passenger automobiles and light trucks for model years 2017 and

beyond. As a result of our actions to date, 225 passenger vehicles and light trucks will emit about half as many GHGs as 2008 models.

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, my next question deals with the fact that there are premiers in the country who are taking some initiatives. I speak about the Premier of Alberta, in particular, who is trying to work with the other provinces and has made trips to visit other premiers from other provinces and has advocated the idea of a Canadian national energy strategy, working collectively in the interests of Canada and the Council of the Federation.

I would like to ask the minister whether he believes in the concept of a national energy strategy. If he does, what action does he plan to take?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, we of course support the collaborative efforts that our provincial colleagues are making with each other and within their own provinces on this file.

I had the opportunity to meet with many of the provincial premiers and many of my counterparts right across the country. Of course, we have an annual meeting every year. We had one in Kananaskis. We had one in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. There will be one in Yellowknife. We will continue to work with the provinces on a collaborative basis.

The Liberals—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Order. We have time for one more short question. The hon. member for Westmount—Ville-Marie.

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, the environment commissioner's spring report gave a scathing review of the lack of federal government oversight and management with the chemicals used in fracking.

Is there funding allocated in this year's estimates to rectify this inaction?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, without question the government is moving in the right direction on this important issue. We place great emphasis on science. It is worth noting that in British Columbia there has been horizontal drilling and hydraulic fracking for almost 50 years. There is not a single instance of contamination of drinking water in that period of time.

However, we will continue to work with scientists to make sure that the best science is available to protect Canadians and protect the environment.

The Assistant Deputy Chair: That will complete the opening round. Now we will proceed into the first rotation.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Vegreville—Wainwright.

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Chair, I am delighted to participate in this debate here tonight. Canadians are very fortunate, as I think we all know, that our country is wealthy in natural resources, and we are the envy of many other countries around the world.

Business of Supply

For generations natural resources have brought opportunity, jobs and growth to every region of this country, and today natural resources account for 15% of our gross domestic product and 50% of our exports. When we include the spinoff industries that provide goods and services to this sector, natural resources account for close to 20% of our GDP, nearly one-fifth of our economy.

Specifically, the energy, mining and forestry industries provide over \$30 billion a year in revenue to governments, money that supports critical social programs such as health, education, pensions and old age security. That \$30 billion is equal to half the spending by all governments together on hospitals last year. Therefore, those MPs across the way who oppose all natural resource development—and that would be the New Democrats—are slowing development, which means that they are limiting the amount of money available for health care and other social programs.

Other benefits include jobs. About 800,000 Canadians work directly in natural resources, while another 800,000 are employed in sectors that serve the natural resource industries. Added up, close to 1.6 million Canadians depend on natural resources for their jobs, making up 10% of all employment in Canada.

Importantly, these are good jobs. My wife Linda and I have five children, and all five of them work in the natural resource sector. All five of them have good jobs because of the success of the businesses in the sector. Not only that, they are all married, and all five of their spouses work in the natural resource sector and have good wages and good jobs. That is something we should all take pride in, instead of working against it, as some across the floor would do.

At the same time, over the next 10 years over 600 major natural resource projects will be under way across this country. That means about \$650 billion in spending on major natural resource projects over the next 10 years. With these opportunities at hand, the Government of Canada is working to increase Canadian trade and investment to facilitate the expansion of Canada's natural resource infrastructure. Sadly, the New Democrats are working against this development as well. They oppose any pipeline that has ever been proposed. They oppose projects like that, and they probably will continue to do so. They laugh about it, but it is a serious issue.

Now I want to talk a bit about our responsible resource development.

To capitalize on these opportunities, our plan for responsible resource development will ensure Canada's regulatory regime is among the most efficient and competitive anywhere in the world. Responsible resource development has put in place more predictable and timely reviews with fixed end dates and will end unnecessary duplication with provincial regimes that meet federal requirements to deliver on our shared objective of one project, one review.

These changes will save time and money, providing the certainty that investors demand. In fact, the reality is that with this accelerated and streamlined process, if a project is given the “no” answer and a company is told that it cannot go ahead, it would much rather that happen after a two-year period than after the eight years that it often takes now for some of the larger projects. Even if the answer is no, it is a lot easier for a company to take if it has invested less time and money in the project.

However, our approach is not just about developing resources efficiently; it is about developing them responsibly. For this reason, our government is committed to protecting the environment. Simply put, we will not approve projects unless they can be done safely.

• (2020)

It is not a question of either developing our natural resources or protecting the environment; we can do both and we must do both. Responsible resource development will ensure stronger environmental protection by increasing our focus on major projects with the most potential for significant environmental impacts on areas of federal jurisdiction and through the introduction of new measures to strengthen compliance and enforcement, including tough new fines for companies that break environmental safety laws.

The Government of Canada has also taken action to strengthen pipeline safety as a part of our plan for responsible resource development. For example, budget 2012 provided the National Energy Board with \$13.5 million more to increase the number of annual inspections on oil and gas pipelines by 50%. That would increase the number of inspections by 50%, from 100 to 150, to improve pipeline safety right across this country.

Further, the government is doubling, from three to six, the number of comprehensive annual audits of oil and gas pipelines to identify potential safety issues before they occur.

On March 18, 2013, we also announced a comprehensive set of measures to ensure we have in place a world-class marine safety system, including a tanker safety expert panel to review Canada's spill response requirements, a review of the liability and compensation regime to ensure the polluter pays for all the costs of cleanup, scientific research on marine pollution risks, the creation of an incident command structure to strengthen emergency response oversight and new investments in navigational aids, inspections, surveillance and monitoring.

Our goal is to prevent incidents from happening, to strengthen our response capacity in the unlikely event that an incident does occur and to ensure that Canadian taxpayers are not left on the hook for the cost of the cleanup.

Responsible resource development also includes a commitment to ensuring more meaningful and consistent consultation with aboriginal peoples and exploring new economic partnerships with aboriginal groups.

The government also recently announced the appointment of a special federal representative to engage aboriginal communities on aboriginal opportunities related to proposed west coast energy infrastructure, such as oil and gas pipelines and marine terminals.

These efforts will help identify opportunities to facilitate greater aboriginal participation in resource development as well as in our ongoing efforts to strengthen environmental protection.

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Quite frankly, we have already seen that development and that engagement of aboriginal people. In the oil sands we have seen companies that are led by aboriginal people and owned by aboriginal people. This model can certainly be expanded.

● (2025)

Just recently—in fact, yesterday—I came back from a meeting of the NATO Parliamentary Assembly. I chair one of the economic committees in that group. We are doing a study on unconventional gas and oil production. At those meetings, we get the message very clearly that Canada had better be as quick as it possibly can in developing liquid natural gas terminals or it will simply be done by other countries around the world.

The United States already has applied for export permits for natural gas. Australia will very soon become the largest producer and exporter of natural gas in the world. The competition is there. We cannot just assume that in Canada we can take our time to develop these liquid natural gas exports and that the markets will be there for us. The reality is that with the cost of the infrastructure required to develop an LNG project, well over \$10 billion, long-term contracts and investment from the country buying the gas are going to be involved. Off the west coast, we could expect China to be one of those, so it is important that we move ahead at the fastest pace that we possibly can.

In closing, I would just like to say that we have done one of the most beneficial things that governments have done in the last many years, probably since the free trade agreement. In putting in place this responsible resource development program, which is a comprehensive program, we have done an awful lot that will allow natural resource industries to move ahead in the future.

I am looking forward to that happening.

● (2030)

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Questions and comments.

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Chair, I will go straight into questions. It is a format that happens every now and again, but not all that often around here.

We know that resource development is crucial to our success as a country. I think we all know that, at least on this side of the House. As an Albertan, I can see these benefits in my riding. They are widespread. I talked about my five children and their spouses. This is what keeps them going. This is what makes their families do quite well, frankly.

Last year, our government implemented our responsible resource development plan that recognized the balance between resource development and environmental protection. How do we ensure that we continue to benefit from resource development while ensuring that the environment is well protected because Canadians expect that of us?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the hon. member for Vegreville—Wainwright for his hard work as chair of our natural resource committee.

As he knows, our plan for responsible resource development would ensure Canada's regulatory regime is among the most efficient and competitive in the world. Responsible resource development

would ensure stronger environmental protection by increasing our focus on major projects with the most potential for significant environmental effects, introducing tough new fines for companies that break our environmental laws, and advancing new measures to ensure world-class pipeline and marine safety regimes.

Our plan for responsible resource development would achieve the balance needed to unleash the potential of Canada's resource sector to create jobs and economic prosperity, while ensuring strong environmental protection and enhanced consultation with aboriginal communities.

Mr. Leon Benoit: Mr. Chair, we have been talking about our responsible resource development program that would put more onus on companies to be much more careful in the way they operate in the natural resource sectors, that would put a lot more onus on them when it comes to the environmental process, to get approval.

With this extra responsibility on companies, I would like to ask the minister whether he believes this process, which in fact would just cut down the timeline for approval or rejection of a project, would actually push companies away from investing in Canada or whether it would encourage more companies to invest in Canada and I would like him to give the reasons for his answer.

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, the NDP policy chaos is a little like looking at a train wreck. The leader of the NDP says that the oil sands are not beneficial for Canada. In fact, he said it is a definition of a Dutch disease. He also thinks that it is a curse.

Then he goes to Alberta and says, “We want to be a partner for the development of our resources”.

Then he goes to Washington and has a meeting with Nancy Pelosi, who says that “Canadians don't want to see the pipeline in their own country”.

After the meeting, he sends his deputy leader to Washington, who then says “We're trying to present a different face of Canada on this”.

We know what that difference face is. It is anti-jobs. It is anti-development. It is anti-trade. The fact is, the NDP cannot be trusted to develop Canada's economy.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Chair, I would like to take a few minutes to talk about the oil sands, which constitute the third largest oil reserves in the world, create jobs and stimulate economic growth across Canada and in all sectors of the Canadian economy. The oil sands development is expected to support an average of 630,000 jobs a year across Canada between 2011 and 2035. An estimated \$2 billion will be injected into the economy—

● (2035)

[*English*]

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Order. That will conclude the time allocated in this particular round. We will go to resuming debate. The hon. member for Vaudeuil-Soulanges.

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[Translation]

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Chair, I will be using my full 15 minutes to ask questions.

Can the minister tell me how many new resource development projects the National Energy Board was asked to review in 2012?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, through the National Energy Board, our government has taken action to prevent pipeline accidents and improve our ability to respond to any incidents that do occur. We increased the number of inspections of federally regulated pipelines by 50% and doubled the number of annual audits.

[English]

The NDP members refuse to even—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Order. The short questions compel short responses. I appreciate that it does have to take some time to get that response in order, but we will try to keep the times as equal as we can on either side.

[Translation]

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Mr. Chair, it was a simple question. The minister should know his portfolio, but clearly, based on how he has to shuffle through his papers, he does not know the answer. He did not answer the question correctly.

I will try again. How many new resource development projects was the National Energy Board asked to review in 2012?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, as I said, the National Energy Board is an independent body.

[English]

The main functions of the NEB include the design, construction, operation, the regulation of design construction, operation abandonment of pipelines, natural gas imports, and oil and gas activities on frontier lands.

[Translation]

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Mr. Chair, the minister clearly does not know the answer.

I will try another question. How many projects is the board expected to be responsible for reviewing in 2013? Does he know the figure for this year, for 2013?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, the question has to do with the number of projects that are under regulation in mid-year. I do not have the answer.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Mr. Chair, that is too bad.

Does the minister know that \$3 million has been cut from the National Energy Board's budget for 2013-14?

[English]

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, the funding to ensure the NEB has clear and robust regulatory oversight throughout the life cycle of the facilities and activities it regulates was put in place. For example, in comparison to 2012-13, the 2013-14 main estimates have increased primarily due to an increase of \$5.6 million for pipeline safety and awareness, a decrease of \$2.3 million in funding for the participant funding program.

[Translation]

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Mr. Chair, it is clear that \$3 million has been cut. You can try to change reality, but here on this side, we know what the reality is.

Can the minister tell us where the department thinks the board will find the means to accomplish these savings?

[English]

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, first just may I say that the NDP does not really care what the NEB concludes because that party comes to its conclusions prior to the scientific evaluations being done.

[Translation]

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Mr. Chair, how many board employees will be responsible for compliance activities in the coming year?

● (2040)

[English]

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, the NEB will have available an additional three-quarters of a million dollars for the fiscal year 2014 for a total of \$2.25 million for public participation in its review of pipeline projects. The NEB has reallocated \$3 million from 2012-13 to 2013-14 and for 2014-15 another \$2.25 million for the trans mountain project.

[Translation]

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Mr. Chair, clearly the minister does not understand my questions in French, but I will try again.

I asked how many board employees will be responsible for compliance activities in the coming year.

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, as I said, the regulatory authority is independent.

I can assure Canadians that they have enough experts to meet their obligations.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Mr. Chair, it may be independent; however, it is the minister's responsibility to ensure oversight of all agencies associated with his department.

Does the minister agree that Canada needs to improve its pipeline safety measures?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, as I said, this government manages resources responsibly, and we are using its plan and taking effective measures to improve the safety and integrity of Canada's pipeline projects.

The plan increases pipeline safety by allocating \$13.5 million over two years to the National Energy Board in order to increase the number of oil and gas pipeline inspections from about 100 to 150 per year. The plan also doubles the number of comprehensive annual audits in order to identify potential problems and prevent incidents from happening.

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Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Mr. Chair, did the minister know, before May 2013, that the NEB did not inspect backup power systems at pump stations on a regular basis and did not consistently enforce the regulations?

[English]

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, the NEB is the agency that oversees the compliance by the energy companies and it will continue to do so.

[Translation]

Canadian companies must comply with National Energy Board regulations. It is an independent regulatory body. The NEB will take all the necessary steps to protect the public and the environment.

When the NEB identifies deficiencies in a company's system, projects or programs, it requires that the company make certain immediate changes to correct those deficiencies or draw up plans for corrective measures that must be approved.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Mr. Chair, I hope that we will comply with the rules for this type of debate and that the time I take to ask my question will be equal to the time the minister takes to respond.

What kind of minister is he? It is clear that the companies have him in their back pocket.

Mr. Chair, did the minister know, before May 2013, that the NEB did not inspect emergency shutdown systems at pump stations on a regular basis and did not consistently enforce the regulations?

[English]

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, we have every confidence in the NEB to do its work, and in fact it is doing so. It is a strong independent regulator of pipeline safety. It subjects pipeline development proposals to an extensive review process taking into account pipeline safety and protection of the environment. Public regulated pipelines boast a safety record of 99.9996% of the crude oil and petroleum product that was transported. I have full confidence the pipeline—

• (2045)

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Order. The hon. member for Vaudreuil-Soulanges.

[Translation]

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Mr. Chair, does the minister know when the regulations applicable to backup power systems and emergency shutdown systems went into effect?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, as I said, we have full confidence in the regulations. The Board has received Enbridge's corrective action plan, which addresses the non-compliance issues, except for Enbridge's plan to address compliance problems on Line 9.

The NEB requires pipeline companies to anticipate, prevent, manage and mitigate situations related to their pipelines that could present a threat and to take immediate action in cases of compliance

—
What is the problem?

[English]

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Order, please. Just a word to hon. members. I do not want to take time away from the debate, but members realize that the questions and responses need to be proportionate in time. That said, for a five second question that compels a complex response, the respondent needs the time to explain that as well. Therefore, we are going to have a healthy debate here. A question that actually compels a rather intricate response, time needs to be permitted to do so.

On the other side of the coin, we compel the respondents to do everything they can to make the responses concise and make them as close to that time as they practically can. All of this is an effort to try and make the debate informative and flow in a way that it helps inform Canadians on the question that is before the committee this evening.

[Translation]

The hon. member for Vaudreuil-Soulanges.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Mr. Chair, does the minister know when the regulations applicable to backup power systems and emergency shutdown systems went into effect?

[English]

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, in the time allotted I will just say that the NEB enforces the regulations.

[Translation]

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Mr. Chair, I can answer the question: the regulations are 14 to 19 years old. There has been no oversight for 14 years.

Does the minister even know what the regulations are called?

[English]

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, our government is investing to ensure Canada has world-class pipeline safety systems and, as reflected in the main estimates, \$5 million is dedicated to increasing inspections for pipelines from 1 to 150 and doubling the amounts of annual audits.

[Translation]

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Mr. Chair, come on. A rookie MP has to tell the minister that they are called the National Energy Board Onshore Pipeline Regulations. It was a very simple question.

How many times has the department had meetings with representatives of the Canadian Standards Association to determine whether regulations for Canada's onshore pipelines are up-to-date and comply with international regulations?

[English]

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, the member opposite is asking me how many times my staff has met with an independent regulator. So many of these questions are questions that would more appropriately be raised with people in the department at a more junior level.

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[Translation]

Canadian corporations must comply with the rules and regulations of the National Energy Board. The latter is an independent regulatory body, and it will take all measures required to protect the public and the environment.

• (2050)

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Mr. Chair, we have seen that the government's public consultation process was flawed, but I am shocked to learn that there were also problems with the consultation process that they held with experts.

Does the minister realize that the number of pipeline-related accidents has increased over the past few years and that those accidents are becoming more serious?

[English]

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, as I said, the safety record for pipelines in our country is 99.9996%. That is a fact and no matter how many times we hear criticism on the other side the fact remains.

However, we will do everything we can to ensure that this number actually decreases. The ultimate objective is that there are no serious pipeline incidents.

[Translation]

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Mr. Chair, the National Energy Board's website says the opposite.

It says that the Board has noticed an increase in the number and severity of incidents being reported by NEB-regulated companies in recent years. There have been six leaks in Alberta alone, which contradicts what the minister said.

Does the minister realize that old pipelines are more likely to break than new ones?

[English]

Hon. Joe Oliver: Technology, Mr. Chair, is obviously improving and so the safety record is improving as well. However, we can get whiplash from following NDP contradictions on pipelines and the oil sands. The New Democrats claim to support resource development, but oppose it at every turn. They oppose pipelines going south, west and east. They are opposing the most recent going east. Before they seemed to be on side. Today at a meeting of the natural resources committee, we heard from a member of the NDP that they were in favour of the number 9 line, but the leader of the party is against it. I do not really know where they stand and I am not sure they do either.

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to speak today and participate in this debate. I plan on using the full 15 minutes to make a few comments. However, I also want to pose a few questions for the minister as well.

My comments and question will primarily focus on pipelines and specifically on our position on the economic potential brought by a west-east pipeline and the safety aspects of bringing oil to the east.

Canada is among the world's leading energy producers. We have the world's fifth largest producer of oil and the third largest proven reserves, estimated at 173 billion barrels, mostly in the oil sands.

As we heard at the natural resources committee, the global demand for crude oil is projected to increase for the next 25 years and beyond, especially in emerging economies. We are the third largest producer of natural gas, with marketable natural gas resources estimated to be as high as 1,300 trillion cubic feet. These are enormous resources and the development of these resources is supporting Canadian prosperity, as we heard comments previously.

Directly and indirectly, Canada's energy sector supports hundreds of thousands of jobs a year for Canadians. The oil sands alone support jobs for some 275,000 people, jobs right across the country in every sector of the economy, such as skilled trades, manufacturing, clerical jobs, the financial sector, everywhere.

The energy sector is also a key source of revenue for governments at all levels. For example, over the past five years the oil and gas extraction industries have added an average of \$22 billion a year to government revenues.

Canada has the energy resources that the world needs. Our challenge going forward is being able to get these valuable resources, oil and natural gas, to tidewater and then to global markets. The solution is an expansion of Canada's energy infrastructure. The energy sector knows this and so does our government, and we are working to facilitate success for this vital economic sector.

Canada's crude oil pipeline system is integrated with the North American pipeline network and nearly all of our oil goes to the United States. Current maximum crude oil pipeline capacity out of Canada is 3.5 million barrels per day.

As western Canadian crude oil production has continued to grow, this production increase has overwhelmed existing pipelines. Canadian crude has oversupplied the local western Canadian market, driving Canadian crude oil prices lower than the prices of similar crudes globally.

Similarly, growing western Canadian and U.S. crude production has oversupplied the Cushing, Oklahoma crude market where West Texas Intermediate crude oil prices are set. West Texas Intermediate is also steeply discounted compared to the prices of similar crudes globally. This is important to Canada as most of our crude sales to the U.S. receive a price influenced by West Texas Intermediate.

What is more, Canadian crude oil production is still growing and pipeline capacity has not kept pace. Canadian crude oil producers currently need more pipeline capacity than is available.

I would like to remind members of the House that pipelines are not just an Alberta or western Canadian issue. Canada's eastern refineries currently have the industry's lowest profit margins. For example, the majority of crude oil consumed in Quebec comes from higher priced international markets and currently costs more than \$100 a barrel as of May 6. We also know that the Irving refinery in New Brunswick, where I am from, also imports large amounts of its crude.

Over the past six months, I know the minister has done a fair amount of travelling. He has been to Saint John, New Brunswick to visit the oil refinery and the Irving refinery. He has also seen firsthand that Canadian refineries can process substantially more Canadian oil, generating more jobs and making our country less reliant on more expensive foreign oil.

Because of a lack of pipeline capacity, the Irving refinery and indeed Quebec currently import crude oil from foreign countries, some with much less stringent environmental standards. The Suncor refinery in Montreal is not currently processing western crude at all but crude from such far-flung sources as Africa, the Middle East and the North Sea.

• (2055)

The Irving refinery, in addition to offshore oil, is also bringing significant quantities of western U.S. oil to Saint John via rail. That could be upwards of 90,000 barrels a day coming into Saint John via rail from the western U.S.

I know our government supports the idea of a pipeline to the east that would bring lower cost Canadian crude to consumers and refineries in Quebec and Atlantic Canada. Such a pipeline to eastern Canada would create new jobs and economic growth across the country, particularly in Quebec and Atlantic Canada. According to Christopher Smillie, senior advisor of government relations for the Canadian Building Trades, even though direct pipeline construction jobs last on average three seasons, he said “the vast bulk of jobs created last for 50 years or more...pipelines link together jobs from one end of the production chain to the other...” That was in our natural resources report, which was tabled in the House on May 2, 2012.

This would allow Canadian refineries to process substantially more Canadian oil, making our country less reliant on more expensive foreign oil. Access to Canada's western crude would allow for lower prices than overseas crude and would help in maintaining the profitability of this refinery and other refineries in eastern Canada.

With regard to our May 9, 2013 committee on natural resources, I think it is important to say something for the record because it talks to the importance of bringing crude from west to east. I want to refer to comments by Mr. Daniel Cloutier in that meeting, when he was talking about the line 9, I guess we would call it re-reversal. He said:

We therefore believe that for the future viability of the Suncor and Ultramar refineries in Quebec, we need a reliable supply of affordable oil that will allow us to compete on equal terms. Maintaining the refineries is also indispensable to the petrochemical industry. The Parachem and CEPSA plants in eastern Montreal, for example, are very dependent on the survival of the Suncor refinery. Losing that Montreal Suncor refinery would, therefore, likely create a chain reaction affecting a number of other employers and threatening to cause a shut down as well. The Line 9 reversal project is currently generating the kind of excitement that has not been seen in eastern Montreal for years, a decade in fact. We now see a number of projects in preparation, with all the players positioning themselves. And we know right now that the reversal will lead to the investment in Quebec refineries, which will have to develop, among other things, units that can handle Canadian crude.

In addition, what was interesting today at our natural resources committee is that John Telford, director of Canadian affairs for the United Association of Journeymen and Apprentices of the Plumbers and Pipe Fitting Industry also talked about west-east being right after Keystone in his priorities. Sarnia, Montreal and in fact New

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Brunswick, would all benefit, and he said that New Brunswick definitely needs that help. Being a New Brunswick MP, we certainly would like to have the economic benefits.

The Saint John delegation, which included the hardworking MP for Saint John, was in Calgary last week to hear very positive news.

With regard to some of the things the minister has learned on export markets, could he talk about the position on east-west pipeline, specifically the benefits of not having more oil in the east refined at the Irving refinery, and maybe more specifically on the ability to get our product to deep water and the benefits of that to Canada?

• (2100)

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, of course our government supports in principle the idea of a pipeline to the east. It would bring lower cost Canadian crude to consumers, and to refineries in Quebec, Lévis and Montreal, and Atlantic Canada, at the Irving refinery in Saint John. Pipelines to eastern Canada would create new jobs and economic growth across the country, particularly in Atlantic Canada.

With respect to the member's question about taking products to deep water, we currently export 80 million tonnes of oil off our east and west coasts every year. In fact, on any given day there are 180 vessels of over 500 tonnes that operate within our waters under Canadian jurisdiction. We welcome all proposals to further diversify our resources.

Mr. Mike Allen: Mr. Chair, many proposals have been made to expand Canada's infrastructure, among these, as I said, are the reversal of Enbridge line 9 and the possible conversion to natural gas/oil of one of the pipelines in the trans-Canada main line system, both of which would take oil to the east. The Keystone XL and Enbridge expansions would move oil south, and the proposed northern gateway and trans-mountain expansion would move Canadian oil to tidewater on the west coast. That said, independent regulators will conduct comprehensive, objective, scientific evaluations to determine whether any specific project passes regulatory muster and is safe for Canadians and for the environment.

The demand to move oil has clearly outstripped the capacity of the North American pipeline network, and as indicated, railways are filling some of this gap for now. However, there is no question that one of the safest and most reliable ways to move very large quantities of oil, as the minister pointed out, is through pipelines. With our plan for responsible resource development, our government has taken steps to enhance our pipeline safety. I know the line 9 reversal proposal is currently before our independent regulator, the National Energy Board, to review that.

Business of Supply

Minister, we talked about the estimates for the NEB. Can you talk specifically about what expenditures are there to ensure pipelines are built that will adhere to a strict safety regime? With the NEB estimates and their responsibility for cradle to grave on the project reviews, is there any concern about the NEB being able to fulfill its mandate as a regulator?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, funding to the NEB ensures that there is a clear and robust regulatory oversight mechanism throughout the life cycle of the facilities and activities it regulates. For example, in comparison to 2012-13, the 2013-14 main estimates have increased, primarily due to an increase of \$5.6 million for pipeline safety and awareness.

The National Energy Board is a strong independent regulator of pipeline safety. The NEB subjects pipeline development proposals to an extensive review process, taking into account pipeline safety, protection of the environment and the public. Regulated pipelines boasted a safety record, as I said, of 99.9996% of the crude oil and petroleum products that were transported.

I have full confidence that pipeline companies will continue to ensure that pipelines meet the NEB's strict safety standards.

• (2105)

Mr. Mike Allen: Mr. Chair, given that a significant portion of the west-east pipeline would travel through the Tobique—Mactaquac riding in New Brunswick, it is very important to constituents of mine that this be done in a safe manner.

Minister, in the estimates you noted there is \$5.6 million allocated for heightened public safety awareness of pipeline safety. When we discussed the \$5.6 million in our committee, it was said that the \$5.6 million is really around \$5 million which is going to actual operations and safety, and inspections, its actual work on the ground. About \$600,000 of that amount is explaining this to Canadians, by enhancing the website and responding to various kinds of inquiries. However, my understanding was that the bulk of it was to be actual safety operations.

When you say “heightened public awareness”, what is your impression of what that means, and what provisions are in the main estimates to make sure we enhance that safety?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, as reflected in the main estimates, \$5 million is dedicated to increasing the inspections for pipelines from 100 to 150, and to the doubling of the amount of annual audits. Almost \$600,000 is allocated for heightened public awareness of pipeline safety.

It is important that Canadians know how to work around pipelines so that both pipelines and the people involved are safe. We welcome initiatives such as the “call before you dig” initiative that will further improve pipeline safety and public safety.

Our government has taken action to prevent pipeline accidents and to improve our ability to respond to any incidents that do occur.

[Translation]

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Chair, I will be using my full 15 minutes for questions.

During the consideration of business of supply in committee, the deputy minister said that about 65 scientist positions have been cut. Which unit did these scientists work in?

[English]

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chairman, Natural Resources Canada is proud of its scientists. We encourage scientists to share their findings and to share their findings with interested parties, by publishing articles and by conducting interviews with the media. In 2012, Natural Resources Canada scientists provided approximately 550 interviews with reporters to discuss scientific results and findings.

[Translation]

On average, every year, scientists publish approximately 500 peer-reviewed articles, while—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Order. The hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

Ms. Laurin Liu: Mr. Chair, 40% of positions have been cut, and the minister refuses to answer questions.

Scientists at Natural Resources Canada play an important role with regard to environmental protection and safety.

What responsibilities did the minister have to abdicate by laying off 60-some scientists?

[English]

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chairman, 42% of NRCan's indeterminate employees were occupying scientific or technical positions before the implementation of savings measures under budget 2012. After the resulting workforce adjustments, 43% of NRCan's indeterminate employees are occupying scientific or technical positions, so that is an increase in percentage.

[Translation]

Ms. Laurin Liu: Mr. Chair, my question had to do with the sectors affected by the cuts and the layoff of 40% of departmental scientists.

Perhaps the minister will be able to answer my next question.

Which regions were affected by the cuts, and how many layoffs were there in Quebec?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, there are four areas in which we are making savings.

We are streamlining administrative support to ensure the sustainability of and make internal savings at Natural Resources Canada.

The savings are related to the use, management and dissemination of information and knowledge; travel; vehicle fleets; programs; services and administrative costs; organizational changes, focusing on core roles and organizing government priorities; focusing on more economically advantageous work and adapting to the industry's changing circumstances—

Business of Supply

• (2110)

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Order. The hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

Ms. Laurin Liu: Mr. Chair, the minister keeps dodging my questions. I will ask the same question again.

Which regions were affected by the cuts and how many layoffs were there in Quebec?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, as I said, the government has committed to balancing the budget by 2015-16.

The savings measures are based on the assurance that Canadians will receive superior value and that our programs, especially grants and contributions, will remain affordable while improving the efficiency of internal operations and services.

Ms. Laurin Liu: Mr. Chair, I am still waiting for an answer, but let us move on.

Is the minister co-operating with the inquiry that the Information Commissioner launched in April 2013 on the Canadian government's systematic efforts to obstruct the right of the media and, by extension, that of Canadians to timely access to the government's scientists?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, Natural Resources Canada complies with the communication policy of the Government of Canada and the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat.

This policy seeks to ensure that communications from the entire Government of Canada are well coordinated, effectively managed and responsive to the diverse information needs of the public. This policy is the same for all departmental spokespersons at Natural Resources Canada, and for the entire Government of Canada.

Ms. Laurin Liu: Mr. Chair, when was the protocol on the relationship between the scientists and the media developed? I would like a short answer.

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, a number of years ago.

Ms. Laurin Liu: Mr. Chair, has this protocol been made public?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, I can check, but I believe so, yes.

Ms. Laurin Liu: Mr. Chair, does the minister control what scientists can say to the media about climate change and the oil sands?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, the very short answer is no.

As I said, Natural Resources Canada is proud of its scientists and encourages scientists to share their findings with interested parties by publishing articles and conducting interviews with the media.

In 2012, Natural Resources Canada scientists participated in approximately 550 interviews with reporters to discuss scientific results and findings. On average, every year, scientists publish approximately 500 peer-reviewed articles in scientific journals.

Ms. Laurin Liu: Mr. Chair, that is absolutely ridiculous. We know that the Conservative government continues to muzzle its scientists.

However, let us move on to cuts to the department. As one of the largest science-oriented departments, Natural Resources Canada plays a key role in supporting economic development in the natural

resources sector. Before the cuts made in recent years, the department had 3,000 employees who supported science and technology activities.

How many of them will be left after all the cuts have been made?

• (2115)

[*English*]

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, it might be worthwhile to talk about the amount our government has invested in scientific research in the member's province of Quebec. We have invested \$1 million in intelligent net zero energy buildings, \$3.3 million in electrical vehicle charging station networks and \$4.7 million for efficient carbon capture from oil sands operation.

Why does the member ignore our government's support for these projects? Perhaps it is because she voted against providing SDTC with \$325 million over eight years. Does the member continue to oppose development at every turn? Why is that? Does she know that

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Order, please. The hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Laurin Liu: Mr. Chair, Canadians want answers, not propaganda.

The government still refuses to be transparent regarding cuts that target scientists and science and technology. Before the cuts made in recent years, the department had 18 major laboratories all over Canada.

How many will remain?

[*English*]

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, it is not propaganda that 80 Quebec companies are suppliers to the oil sands. We do not know why the NDP keeps on opposing projects that result in job creation throughout the country, including, of course, Quebec.

NRCan is a results-oriented science organization with national presence. It has 19 major research sites across Canada, including the north, and more than 2,300 scientists, researchers, technicians and support staff delivering science and technology activities. Expenditures were \$582 million in 2011-12 and \$554 million in 2012-13.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Laurin Liu: Mr. Chair, for the Conservatives, it is the oil sands or nothing.

The minister said that certain radical environmental groups were trying to block Canadian trade and hurt our economy. He said, and I quote, "Unfortunately, there are environmental and other radical groups that would seek to block this opportunity to diversify our trade."

Can the minister name a single group that is trying to hurt Canada's economy?

*Business of Supply**[English]*

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, first of all, it is not a choice of oil sands or nothing. With the NDP, it is nothing.

Who has opposed it? Well, I have to look across the aisle. For every single major project that we have been proposing for the benefit of Canada, Canadian jobs, Canadian economic activity, for billions of dollars of revenue to governments to support critical social programs, whether the projects are going west, south or east, the NDP is in opposition, yet the NDP members get up and talk to the government as if they are on the side of jobs—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Order. The hon. member for Rivière-des-Mille-Îles.

[Translation]

Ms. Laurin Liu: Mr. Chair, on the contrary, the NDP is in favour of sustainable development. However, the minister continues to make ridiculous statements. He said:

They attract jet-setting celebrities with some of the largest personal carbon footprints in the world to lecture Canadians not to develop our natural resources. Finally, if all other avenues have failed, they will take a quintessential American approach: sue everyone and anyone to delay the project even further.

Can the minister give an example of this approach and name the groups that have used such an approach?

[English]

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, I do not know where the hon. member has been.

Every single major resource project since I have been appointed minister has been opposed by several environmental groups—every single one. If the member opposite has been paying attention, she would know that.

I cannot say that the NDP has opposed every one, but it has opposed every one that I can recall, or every important one.

• (2120)

[Translation]

Ms. Laurin Liu: Mr. Chair, I can assure the minister that I have spoken with environmental groups, and they are not part of the jet set.

I would like to quote something Preston Manning said:

It goes without saying that, with respect to any energy production, it is important to determine the environmental impact it will have and the cost of risk management, in order to include it in the price of the product.

Does the minister agree with this statement?

[English]

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, of course, and that is what I have been saying repeatedly. We will not go ahead with any project unless it is safe for Canadians and safe for the environment, but if it is, we will certainly go ahead, and we will, therefore, create the million jobs in the next 25 years, the \$3 trillion to \$4 trillion in economic activity and the hundreds of billions of dollars to support social programs. We believe that our resources can be developed responsibly and we intend to pursue that objective in the interests of Canadian prosperity and security.

[Translation]

Ms. Laurin Liu: Mr. Chair, if the minister agrees with those statements, what measures has his department taken to assess the environmental repercussions of current resource development projects?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, as I said, the regulatory system analyzes each project scientifically in order to protect the environment and Canadians.

Ms. Laurin Liu: On the contrary, Mr. Chair, we know that the Conservative government gutted the environmental assessment process last year. However, I would like to talk about cuts to the department.

In recent years, before the cuts, the department published approximately 900 scientific publications per year. How many publications were released last year?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, I provided those numbers. Responsible resource development will enhance environmental protection by putting more emphasis on large projects that are more likely to significantly affect the environment, by imposing heavy fines on companies that break environmental laws and by setting out new measures to ensure world-class safety measures for pipelines and maritime safety.

[English]

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Mr. Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to engage in this debate tonight.

Sometimes—not always, but sometimes—it is forgotten that the purpose of the House is to engage in substantive debate on substantive issues. One of the things we need to realize and grasp about the Canadian economy and what is important to Canadians is the importance of the natural resources industry. When we look at our industries that export and create jobs, the natural resources sector, particularly in certain areas of the country, tends to be dominant. We also need to grasp and understand that many of the jobs in the service sector in places such as Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver are based on the natural resources industry.

Tonight the specific aspect that I wish to concentrate on is what mining means to this country in terms of the Canadian economy and jobs for people all across this country.

I have a particular interest in this subject that has to do with my occupation prior to being elected to the House of Commons. I was trained and proudly graduated from the University of Saskatchewan as a geophysicist. This was in the era when there was \$20 oil and the price of gold was considerably lower. Now we talk about how the rich oil and mining companies make money, but there have been years when it has been fairly tough to make a living in this industry.

I worked and got great experience in northern Quebec, our three territories of Nunavut, the Northwest Territories and the Yukon, and of course Saskatchewan and the neighbouring province of Manitoba. This personal experience in the industry impacts to this very day how I approach policy issues and my understanding of the various things that impact and affect mining and natural resource development specifically. Let me give an example.

Business of Supply

Frequently in the House we have dealt with legislation that has to do with the regulatory impacts, meaning regulation and what it means to mining. We in Canada should be proud of our environmental record on mining. There have been grave problems in certain instances, but in general we should be proud.

I think of a specific time when I was working as a junior geophysicist in northern Manitoba and was talking with a senior geologist, a gentleman with close to 20 years of experience.

Geology is one of those occupations that cannot be learned in the classroom. It takes a certain maturing and a certain degree of field experience. It does not matter how long one spends in the classroom; one cannot overestimate the value of that experience.

However, this senior geologist, someone with 20 years of field experience, was explaining to me that more than 50% of his time was spent dealing with regulations and permits, things that, while necessary, were not fundamental things for which his experience as a geologist would be of most use and impact.

That, to this day, has impacted how I think about the industry. There is so much productivity in our mining industry and in our workforce, but we do things to hold it back and slow down what we have there.

We need to grasp who it is that works in the mining industry. We know about the financial sector in Vancouver and Toronto, which I will talk about, but in areas of northern Canada where the aboriginal population in places like Nunavut does not have to this day a very strong, functioning economy in the historic sense based upon trapping and the various traditional arts, mining has in many cases been the only economic driver.

We see that in Nunavut and in northern Saskatchewan. This is an industry that does not pay poor wages; it pays top-dollar wages, not just for highly skilled tradespeople such as electricians and people who work some of the equipment but for miners, because it is tough work. These people very much deserve the wages they receive, and they are very productive because of the high capital put into it.

Coming from Saskatchewan, I can ask what mining fundamentally means to my home province. For people listening tonight, the answer is that Saskatchewan is the province most dependent on mining in the whole country on a per capita basis. It is one of the reasons that Saskatchewan is, per capita, also the province in the country with the highest degree of international exports and the least dependence upon the U.S. market.

• (2125)

Potash in our province is a \$7-billion-a-year industry. It has attracted some very large companies. BHP Billiton, the largest company in the world, is looking at building, in the corner of my constituency, an approximately \$10-billion mine, give or take a few billion dollars. That is the sort of impact it has in areas such as Saskatoon. Other companies, such as Mosaic and PCS, a Saskatchewan headquartered potash giant, the largest in the world, are from Saskatchewan. Along with Vancouver and Toronto, Saskatoon is becoming the third capital of mining in Canada.

What does mining mean, and not just to areas in the remote north, not just to places like Baffin Island, where we are looking at a brand

new iron ore deposit, or places like northern Ontario? I see my hon. friend, who is a big fan of the Ring of Fire and the potential development there. What else does it mean to places like Toronto or Vancouver, places that we do not always automatically connect with the mining sector?

Let me throw out a few facts from the TSX Venture Exchange mining stocks. The percentage of the world's public mining companies listed in Canada: 58%. The ranking in the world for publicly listed: number 1. The number of listed mining companies: 1,665. The number of companies that have mines in production or under development: 326. The numbers go on and show how important mining is to Canada.

Canadian-headquartered mining companies accounted for nearly 37% of budgeted worldwide exploration expenditures in 2012. That means that our lawyers, finance people, accountants, technical people, and legal people have good jobs in the service sector in places such as Vancouver and Toronto. The jobs spin out. We see this in things like the quality of our education, such as at the world-class mining program we find at Queen's University in Kingston. We in Canada are proud of this history. We see it in our scientific research as the world's leader per capita, and very close in real numbers, in terms of knowledge and the number of geological papers produced.

At the base of it, mining is important to all of Canada. Twenty per cent of our exports come from mining, and this does not include oil and gas, which is shipped through the pipelines. Mining is good for Canada, particularly northern Canada, as it is often the only thing there for building its economy.

How has the government and the natural resources committee been working and dealing with supporting mining? Earlier this year, we did a report on development in northern Canada. We broadly and loosely defined the term, but again and again, the overwhelming theme that came out was the importance of mining, the importance of connecting what is down in the south with what is up in the north.

A couple of major themes began to emerge in that report, and we see this throughout everything we are doing. The first is that regulatory changes have an impact. They make a difference. We were talking today in committee about another subject. Thankfully, this involved the United States, where it took 14 years to get permitting done for a project that took only 18 months to get into play. We do not see that in the Canadian mining sector anymore. In fact, one of the things that makes us competitive is the way the federal government has been working in coordination with the provinces to increase regulatory changes that make sense. As someone who experienced that as a junior geophysicist talking with a senior geologist, I understand how that has an impact on the ground.

Business of Supply

A second major theme we have been noting is labour force changes. It takes a great deal of skill. People often deride Canadians as hewers of wood and haulers of water, as if extracting natural resources is not something to be proud of. Some of the world's most profitable companies today are extracting natural resources. There are major dollars and large incomes. One hundred thousand dollar a year jobs are not uncommon in this industry.

• (2130)

Those are two areas where the government has been working with the industry and the general public to get them involved. It is providing and streamlining regulatory changes and labour force changes to provide a workforce for the industry and better jobs for Canadians.

As I noted earlier, potash is very important to the province of Saskatchewan. We are also fairly unique as one of the world's major producers of uranium. Along with Kazakhstan and Australia, we are one of the big three. The entire uranium-producing industry in Canada is now located in the province of Saskatchewan.

I wish to ask the parliamentary secretary about the government's approach to regulation and the uranium sector. I am particularly interested in knowing about the regulations and the approach we have had to uranium and to the nuclear sector.

Perhaps the parliamentary secretary would also provide a bit of a contrast with the positions the other parties have taken on this issue and explain how this resource is mined safely, what the strict regulations are and what the government's view on uranium and mining regulations is.

• (2135)

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources and for the Canadian Wheat Board, CPC): Mr. Chair, again, it is good to be up this evening.

There is an incredible contrast between our position and that of the NDP, the opposition, when it comes to the important uranium resources we have in this country. Our government supports safe and responsible uranium production. We all know that it is a highly regulated industry, and it has been since the beginning. It needs to pass muster with our independent regulatory agency as well. The Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, of course, is that regulator.

Over the last few years, we have promoted trade in the uranium sector by signing new agreements with China and India, two of the largest uranium users in the world. Those agreements insist that they use uranium for peaceful means and peaceful uses.

This has created jobs. It has created growth, particularly in our province of Saskatchewan but also right across the country.

On the other hand, I need to point out that the NDP has been very clear that it opposes nuclear energy in all its forms. It is frustrating to us. We see the NDP opposing mining. We see it opposing pipelines. We see it opposing oil sands. We see it opposing shale gas. However, it has been particularly vehement in its opposition to the nuclear industry in all forms.

I hear some heckling from across the way. My good friend across the way should listen to his leader when his leader, in 2008, in this

very room, said, "I want to be very clear. The NDP is opposed to any new nuclear infrastructure in Canada".

I do not know if that extends to research in medical isotope production. I am not sure if it does. He maybe could explain that.

Apart from that, there are 23,000 jobs across Canada the NDP is saying no to, on top of all the other resource sectors the NDP is opposed to.

It is frustrating. I know that the member for Saskatoon—Humboldt may have some other comments he would like to make about this.

Mr. Brad Trost: Mr. Chair, very briefly, to the parliamentary secretary, how is the government balancing environmental needs and development needs? How is the government contributing to a more environmentally friendly mining sector?

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Chair, I am sure that the opposition members across the way are going to want to ask about the green mining initiative. I look forward to them bringing questions forward. It brings stakeholders together to develop and demonstrate new green technologies and processes. It is creating new opportunities for Canadian mining, technology and service industries, both here in Canada and around the world.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Chair, my questions are for the minister, and he is not here.

The Chair: The parliamentary secretary is here to answer questions in the absence of the minister.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Chair, I will be using my full 15 minutes for questions.

Does the Department of Natural Resources have a seat at the Ring of Fire Secretariat?

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Chair, it is good to be here. The Ring of Fire is a strategically important mineral resource region in northern Ontario. It is interesting that the opposition seems to be ambivalent about its relationship to it. The member opposite is fairly supportive of it. Other members of his party are not as supportive of that whole project and of mining development and things that go with it. We understand that it holds over \$60 billion in metal potential and deposits and could become one of the most significant mineral deposits in our country, and we are working on that project.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Chair, how many Ring of Fire Secretariat meetings has the minister attended?

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Chair, that is the exciting thing, and I hope you will give me a little bit of time here. Mr. Clement, the President of the Treasury Board and the Minister for the Federal Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, has been appointed to lead federal efforts and ensure that Canada takes advantage of the resource development opportunities in the Ring of Fire.

I hope that the member opposite will be willing to work with us on that, because this is a tremendous opportunity for that part of the world. He may have to work against his own party, but we certainly look forward to working with him.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Chair, I hope the minister can answer the questions.

Business of Supply

Could the minister list the companies that he or his senior officials have met with in conjunction with the Ring of Fire development?

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Chair, I would just point out that the President of the Treasury Board has responsibility for this. He has been given that responsibility. We look forward to his working on this and certainly look forward to the member opposite working with him.

● (2140)

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Chair, could the minister list the first nations communities he or his senior officials have met with in conjunction with the Ring of Fire?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, my colleague has mentioned that the President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario has responsibility for the Ring of Fire. I have personally met with quite a few aboriginal leaders across the country and will continue to do that going forward.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Chair, has the minister met with the Matawa First Nations?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, the department has. I have met with National Chief Atleo and with the Canadian Aboriginal Minerals Association. I have met with Grand Chief David Harper and Chief Jerry Primrose in Manitoba and with Grand Chief Ron Michel and Vice Chief Simon Bird in Saskatchewan. In Alberta I have met with Chief Allan Adam. In British Columbia I have met with Chief Robert Louie, Chief Ellis Ross, Chief Ed John, Chief Doug White, Chief Ian Campbell, Chief Calvin Helin, first nations—

The Chair: The hon. member for Nickel Belt.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Chair, has the minister met with the chiefs of Ontario?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, the department has met with the chiefs in Ontario, and of course, my colleague, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, has met with those chiefs as well.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Chair, what input has the department had on training programs for first nations related to the Ring of Fire?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, the question is directed at the wrong minister. I do not have that detail, nor would I be expected to, nor would the questioner expect me to.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Chair, can the minister confirm that anyone who wants to have access to workforce training must have a high school diploma?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, this is not one of my portfolio responsibilities. There is a minister responsible for relations with aboriginal peoples. The President of the Treasury Board and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario is in charge of leading the federal efforts while ensuring that Canada takes advantage of opportunities to develop the Ring of Fire resources.

[*English*]

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Chair, is the minister aware that the dropout rate in some communities in places like Webequie and the Ring of Fire area is 62%?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, this is a very important issue. What I have been saying across the country, and what my colleagues have been saying as well, is that there is an enormous transformative opportunity for the responsible development of our natural resources to benefit aboriginal communities right across the country. It is one of the driving forces for our government and for me personally to see those enormous benefits accrue to aboriginal communities from these vast resources.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Chair, the minister was in Capreol last week in my riding, which is where the smelter is proposed for the Ring of Fire project. Did the minister meet with anyone on the proposed smelter?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, I did not meet with anyone with respect to that activity. However, let me reinforce the point I made before. The natural resource sector is the largest private employer of aboriginal people in Canada.

● (2145)

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Chair, what work is being done by the department to identify the workforce skills that will be required for the smelter to run?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, again, this is the responsibility of another minister. You can keep asking the questions, but you are still getting the same answer.

The Chair: I caution the minister to direct his comments to the Chair and not to other members of the House.

The hon. member for Nickel Belt.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Chair, has the department made any assessments of the shortages in skills and in skills training to ensure the local workforce is ready for the project in 2016?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, the government will of course deal with the issues that are raised. My colleague, the President of the Treasury Board, is occupying himself in that connection.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Chair, when in Capreol, did the minister meet with Capreol's safety, health and environmental committee that has been seeking a full environmental assessment for the smelter?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, again, there is a combination here of what is the responsibility of my colleague and the responsibility of an environmental review panel. The question is directed in the wrong direction, as the member opposite well knows. I do not why he is wasting the time of the House.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Chair, I would like to remind the minister that he is the Minister of Natural Resources.

What has the government done in greater Sudbury to invest in skills training for natural resources development?

Business of Supply

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, budget 2013 announced \$4.4 million over three years to FedNor to provide targeted support to aboriginal communities in the Ring of Fire. The funding will provide support for business skills development, strategic business planning and aboriginal youth engagement to ensure they benefit from resource development opportunities in the region.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Chair, does the minister agree with the statement that, “The Crown obligation to engage first nations in a meaningful way has yet to be taken up with respect to natural resources development projects?”

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, the short answer is no. Our government takes very seriously our constitutional responsibility to consult and, if necessary, to accommodate the responsible resource development. The legislation that was passed last year, against the objection of the NDP, has enhanced and enriched the opportunity for aboriginal communities to participate.

I announced the appointment of Mr. Doug Eyford who will be reporting—

The Chair: The hon. member for Nickel Belt.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Chair, could the minister provide a definition for “directly affected” with respect to public participation in resources project reviews in sections 55.2 in the National Energy Board Act?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, I announced the appointment of Mr. Doug Eyford who is reporting directly to the Prime Minister. He is responsible for western infrastructure development and he is now, and will be, working closely with aboriginal communities to find ways that they can maximize their benefit from the development of our resources. The—

The Chair: The hon. member for Nickel Belt.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Chair, how many community, environmental and aboriginal groups did the department consult with prior to changing the National Energy Board Act to limit public participation and project reviews?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, since these questions require longer answers, I will answer the previous question.

Our government is committed to a robust National Energy Board review system that is based on science and the facts. The board must hear from those who are directly affected and may choose to hear from those with relevant information or expertise. Focusing consultation on individuals directly affected by a proposal before the NEB and experts with relevant information or expertise ensures the review is informed by the facts. The NEB—

• (2150)

The Chair: The hon. member for Nickel Belt.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Chair, let us see if he can answer this one.

Could the minister identify which departmental performance indicators in the 2013-14 report on plans and priorities provide targets related to aboriginal economic development?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, as I was saying, the NEB is committed to simplifying the form and the application process to those wishing to participate, and that is those who are directly

affected by a proposal before the NEB and they have the right to be heard.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Chair, the answer is none.

[*Translation*]

Can the minister tell us how many aboriginal communities are located within 200 km of mining sites in Canada?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, the reason I said that there is a huge potential benefit for aboriginal groups is that in many cases they live close to natural resource projects.

[*English*]

Therefore, it is estimated that there are 32,000 aboriginal peoples currently employed in the natural resources sector and it is estimated that there will be 300,000 workers needed in the resources sector over the next decade. At the same time, nearly 400,000 aboriginal youth are expected to enter the labour force, creating an unprecedented opportunity for aboriginal employment.

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Chair, how many agreements have been concluded between mining companies and aboriginal communities or governments across the country?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, about 300.

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Chair, I would be more than glad to add my voice to the reasoned side of the debate in this chamber this evening.

I would like to thank the minister for taking his valuable time out tonight to answer questions, as ridiculous as some of them may have been from the other side. He does an excellent job in his leadership role as the Minister of Natural Resources.

As a member of Parliament from Alberta, natural resources are absolutely vital and important to our economy. We could not have a better minister looking after that portfolio.

I am grateful for the opportunity to be part of this important debate. I will discuss our priorities for the natural resources portfolio.

On May 2, 2011, Canadians gave our government a strong mandate to focus on jobs and the economy.

Since the depths of the global recession, Canada's economy has created over 950,000 net new jobs. This is the best performance in the G7. Our real GDP is now significantly higher than pre-recession levels, again the best performance in the G7.

However, we still face a fragile global economic recovery and too many Canadians are still looking for work. That is why we are squarely focused on implementing economic action plan 2013, our low-tax plan to create jobs, growth and long-term prosperity for Canadians.

Business of Supply

The economy is a top priority for our government. Our natural resource sectors contribute significantly to our economic success, generating close to 1.6 million jobs and driving almost 20% of our GDP. Canada is the world's fifth largest producer of oil and just our proven reserves are the third largest in the world at 173 billion barrels and as technology advances, more will become available.

We are also the third largest producer of natural gas. In fact, our recoverable gas resources are estimated to be as high as 1,300 trillion cubic feet.

The oil sands in particular have become one of Canada's great economic engines. This resource has attracted more than \$185 billion in investment, \$25 billion in the last year alone.

Over the past five years, royalties and taxes generated by the energy sector have added \$25 billion a year to government coffers. That helps to pay for everything from roads and bridges to education and health care, the core services and infrastructure that Canadians depend on every day in every part of our country.

Within the next 25 years, the oil sands alone could be supporting 630,000 Canadian jobs, not just in Alberta but right across the entire country.

Canada has some very significant energy resources for export. We are about to become a major player in global energy markets through our exports of liquefied natural gas and oil, a role in which Canada can offer energy security and economic stability to the world. This is why it is so critical that we have the capacity to deliver this resource to new markets.

It will come as no surprise to the members of this committee that Canada's energy has traditionally flowed south. In fact, 99% of our crude oil and all of our natural gas exports are sent to the United States, a sole customer. However, the United States is now finding its own wealth of oil and gas reserves and in future will be less reliant on importing oil from Canada and elsewhere.

The International Energy Agency predicts that the U.S. will become the world's largest oil producer by 2020. That is why Canada must build and expand the infrastructure needed to move our product to tidewater for export to other countries as well.

Therefore, Canada is looking to build infrastructure to move energy both west and east as well as south. Right now there are four major proposed oil pipeline projects in Canada, two to connect Alberta's oil to the west coast and overseas markets, the other two to use existing infrastructure to link western production with markets in eastern Canada. We know pipelines are a safe and efficient way to transport crude to world markets. This is why it is vital that we continue to develop our pipeline capacity in Canada.

Our government strongly supports the opportunity for our refineries to process substantially more Canadian oil, generating jobs for Canadians and making our country less reliant on expensive foreign oil. Diversifying our markets will give Canada access to global markets and prices for Canadian crude oil and petroleum products. Currently, Canada is forced to sell its crude at a considerable discount. In February, this was as much as \$30 U.S. a barrel below global prices. Today, the gap has closed significantly to just under \$10 a barrel.

Differentials change quickly and reflect market forces, such as increasing production, adjusted transmission, infrastructure and difficulties accessing appropriate refineries. Producers, provincial governments and the Government of Canada all suffer as a result of elevated differentials, as do portions of the Canadian public via losses of jobs and reduced investment returns.

• (2155)

It is estimated that the Province of Alberta alone, loses, or leaves on the table, billions, up to \$5 billion to \$8 billion, a year in royalties alone on the price differential. Narrowing that price gap will ensure that Canadian producers can obtain the best possible price for their crude and ensure that Canadians realize the maximum benefit of this great resource.

Canada is also targeting new global opportunities for liquefied natural gas. Our recoverable resources are currently estimated at as much as 1,300 trillion cubic feet, as I said earlier, a number that will grow significantly as offshore development continues and new shale deposits are discovered. The Conference Board of Canada estimates that B.C.'s natural gas sector could attract more than \$180 billion in investment between 2012 and 2035, an average of more than \$7.5 billion in new investment each year. On the west coast, the first of a number of proposed LNG projects could be in operation as early as 2015. Based on potential and proposed projects, Canada could be exporting the equivalent of 75 million tons of liquefied natural gas per year from the west coast, with project startups expected before the decade is out.

Japan, South Korea and China have all expressed interest in LNG from Canada's west coast, and they are active participants in current Canadian LNG export proposals. Partners in one of the proposed LNG projects, for example, include Korea Gas Corporation, PetroChina Company Limited, and Japan's Mitsubishi Corporation.

India is now expressing interest in LNG exports from Canada's east coast. That is a logical step, since Canada's Atlantic provinces are closer to the west coast of India than any other place in North America. Our overall goal is to make Canada the platform for North American liquefied natural gas exports.

Business of Supply

Canada is also aggressively pursuing agreements that will allow Canadian businesses to compete in some of the world's fastest growing economies. We know that between 2010 and 2035, the International Energy Agency predicts that global energy demand may grow by up to 35%. In this scenario, China, India and the Middle East will account for a staggering 60% of this increase in world demand. Already India is facing an electricity shortfall of about 8%, with peak shortages of more than 10% in 2011 and 2012. To meet its growing needs, India aims to more than triple its electricity supply within the next 25 years.

That is why our government was delighted that last month Canada and India took the important step toward full implementation of a nuclear co-operation agreement. Once the agreement is finalized, Canadian companies will be able to export controlled nuclear materials, equipment and technology to India for peaceful energy-producing purposes. When we consider that India's nuclear energy output is expected to more than double by 2020, Canada stands to gain a large portion of that growing nuclear energy market.

Canada has a diversified energy mix, one that can help drive the national economy and build global energy security.

As an Alberta MP, something that is near and dear to me is the expansion and diversification of our energy markets. It is absolutely critical for not only my province but of course the entire country. It is a top priority for the Government of Canada. To capitalize on these opportunities, our plan for responsible resource development introduced important new measures to eliminate unnecessary duplication that was weighing down project reviews and to get projects moving quicker.

Our plan will ensure Canada's regulatory regime is among the most efficient, effective and competitive in the world, while strengthening environmental protection and enhancing consultations with aboriginal Canadians. This includes important new measures to strengthen marine and pipeline safety, to ensure our resources can be transported safely to markets around the world.

We are also making every effort to ensure that aboriginal people in Canada can share the benefits of energy development in the years ahead. Just recently, the Prime Minister appointed a new high-level energy adviser, the Government of Canada's special federal representative on west coast energy infrastructure, to engage with aboriginal peoples in British Columbia and Alberta who could benefit from future development of energy infrastructure projects.

Realizing the potential of our energy sector is critical to our government's goal of jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. That is why our government is so focused on creating the right conditions for success.

I would like to thank my colleagues for their support and encouragement. If I am permitted, I would like to ask the more than capable minister a few questions deeply relevant to Albertans.

I would like to keep my questions related to pipeline safety, at least this initial question. The issue is near and dear. Albertans understand very well the benefit of pipelines. There are miles and miles, kilometres and kilometres of pipeline in Alberta, whether it is delivering natural gas to our homes or delivering product to upgraders, refineries or our export markets.

● (2200)

We are very concerned as well, because Albertans love their environment, their outdoors and their outdoor pursuits. We work hard in Alberta and we play hard as well.

We are all aware of the benefits that the energy sector generates, not only for Albertans, but for our country. However, we must ensure that this oil is transported safely. I would like to ask the minister what the government is doing to ensure that pipelines in Canada maintain a high safety record. As well, if the minister is able to share with us what the safety record of pipelines regulated by the National Energy Board is, that information would be most beneficial.

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the member for Wetaskiwin for his important question. I agree that pipeline safety is crucial to ensuring the transport of petroleum products across the country. The NEB subjects pipeline development proposals to an extensive review process that ensures that pipelines are safe for the public and protect the environment.

I am proud to say that pipelines regulated by the NEB boast a safety record of 99.9996%. This is an impressive safety record that we continually strive to improve. Our government has taken action to further improve pipeline safety. These actions include increasing the number of inspections at federally regulated pipelines by 50%, doubling the number of comprehensive audits and putting forward new fines for companies that break Canada's rigorous environmental protection.

Our government will continue to take a balanced approach to resource development that creates jobs and growth, unlike the NDP, which opposes all developments of pipelines and the jobs they create.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Chair, how much time do I have left?

The Chair: You have two seconds.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Chair, that is fantastic. Thank you very much, Mr. Chair, and many thanks to the member for the answer.

It is clear the government is taking significant action to ensure that pipeline safety in Canada is, of course, very high. One would expect that the opposition would be supportive of the measures that were being put forward. They are so important to Canada and to the safe transport of oil and natural gas across our country.

I would like to ask the minister if he can share with us the position that the opposition parties have taken on these important issues.

Business of Supply

• (2205)

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, I appreciate this question and welcome the opportunity to put on record the opposition's position on these important measures.

While common sense would dictate that both the NDP and the Liberals would have supported the increased safety measures that our government introduced, unfortunately, it is not surprising that these measures were not supported by the opposition parties. Both the Liberals and the NDP voted against increasing pipeline inspections by 50%. They voted against doubling the number of comprehensive audits. They voted against imposing new fines for companies that do not follow our environmental laws. This is unfortunately a pattern with the opposition. It opposes any measure to make resource development even safer, as it would rather not have development at all.

Our government is the only government that will take serious steps to improve pipeline safety across the country. I have full confidence that pipeline companies will continue to ensure that pipelines meet the NEB's strict safety standards. This is not only a substantive issue. It is also an issue of gaining the confidence of the public, the so-called social licence. We must proceed with these world-class safety measures for pipelines and for maritime safety, both because it is the right thing to do and because we want to protect Canadians and the environment.

We also want to communicate clearly to the Canadian population that we are taking these actions in order to achieve the social license to permit us to develop these resources for the benefits of Canadians right across the country.

The Chair: The hon. member only has less than 30 seconds, so a quick question and a quick answer.

Mr. Blaine Calkins: Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the minister for his hard work when he travels to Washington or other places outside of Canada to engage other countries in the benefits of Canadian natural resources.

Could he contrast that with some of the ridiculous positions and messages that have been in the media about what other parties, particularly the NDP, have taken on their anti-trade missions?

The Chair: I am afraid that the minister is out of time. We will move on.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Westmount—Ville-Marie has the floor.

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, I will continue with questions.

[*English*]

In the 2013-14 main estimates, \$5.6 million is allotted to the National Energy Board for what is called "heightened public awareness". How much of that \$5.6 million is allotted to advertising?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, I believe that question was answered, but I am happy to repeat it.

As reflected in the main estimates, \$5 million is dedicated to increasing the inspections for pipelines from 100 to 150 and

doubling the amount of annual audits. An amount of \$600,000 was devoted to the issue of communication.

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, in the main estimates, the budgetary expenditures for AECL is \$211.1 million for this fiscal year. In the supplementary estimates, the government is now asking for another \$260 million, which is even more than the original amount in the main estimates.

I note that AECL has spent almost \$620 million to date in the 2012-13 estimates. Why has there been such poor planning with the original main estimates?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, AECL funding for its nuclear laboratories in the 2013-14 main estimates has remained constant at \$102 million. As has been the case in recent years, and in the context of the ongoing restructuring, AECL has required additional funding to meet its ongoing operational requirements.

This year, budget 2013 provided AECL with \$141 million, over two years, on an accrual basis. This funding will enable AECL to ensure the production of medical isotopes, health and safety upgrades and environmental protection.

Additionally, AECL continues to receive statutory funding for addressing legal obligations relating to the divestiture of its former CANDU reactor division. These requirements are decreasing, and \$109 million was provided for AECL in—

• (2210)

The Chair: The hon. member for Westmount—Ville-Marie.

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, how many projects were submitted to the National Energy Board for study in 2012?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, this is a matter for the National Energy Board. It is public on their site, or it will be at the appropriate time.

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, I am talking about 2012. I would think that information would be available, and that the Minister of Natural Resources, who has responsibility for it, should be aware of it.

Let me proceed with my next question. What specific action is the government taking with Enbridge on the 83 pump stations that do not have an emergency off button and the 117 pumping stations that do not have backup power in case of a pipeline leak?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, as I mentioned in response to a previous question, the National Energy Board is looking at this issue and will ensure that Enbridge takes the appropriate corrective action that the NEB requires.

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, I assume that means NEB will tell them that they must have backup power at each of the pumping stations and they must also have an emergency off button in the case that they leak.

Business of Supply

For my next question, can the minister list any research funded by the government, or that will be funded in main estimates, that addresses the behaviour of dilbit, or diluted bitumen, in the environmental conditions likely to be found on B.C.'s north coast, i.e., cold saline water which is an environment where the winds, the swells, and the currents can be quite extreme?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, there has been extensive research indicating that the corrosiveness of diluted bitumen is no greater than that of light crude. However, it is part of the plan to continue to conduct further research in that connection. The research will relate to non-conventional petroleum products such as diluted bitumen, but beyond that to enhancing understanding of how these substances behave when spilled in a marine environment, including in the north.

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, obviously at the beginning the minister did not understand my question. He was thinking that I was referring to what happens to dilbit in pipelines themselves and then later on said there will be studies about what happens.

Considering the northern gateway pipeline and the possible implications, I would like to ask him again, very specifically, this question: does the government know what happens to dilbit if there is a major spill in the north Pacific Ocean?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, I thank the member opposite for not only asking the question but repeating my answer to it.

We are conducting research on offshore maritime safety—in other words, the performance of dilbit in ocean waters—as well as the studies we have done in respect of pipelines, because both are relevant to security. Environment Canada, Fisheries and Oceans and NRCan together are working on those issues.

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, if research is being conducted, let me ask the minister what happens to dilbit if it is spilled in large amounts in the Hecate Strait.

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, neither I nor the member opposite is a scientist. I said they are conducting research. How would I know what the precise results of that research would be?

We have recently tabled a new bill, the safeguarding Canada's seas and skies act, that would require terminal facilities to submit pollution prevention plans, to streamline penalties so polluters can be fined, to empower Transport Canada inspectors to remove legal barriers that would otherwise—

• (2215)

The Chair: The hon. member for Westmount—Ville-Marie.

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, can I ask the minister what research is specifically being done at the moment by the government, and by whom, on the effects of dilbit being spilled into the north Pacific? He says it is under way. I would like to know who is doing it.

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, it really is strange. The member listens to some of my answers and repeats them, but he seems to miss others.

Environment Canada, Fisheries and Oceans and NRCan are looking at these issues. I can repeat that, if you would like, or would you prefer to repeat it?

The Chair: I would remind the minister to direct his comments to the Chair, not to the member.

The hon. member for Westmount—Ville-Marie.

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, needless to say, I look forward with great anticipation to some results from this, considering that the National Energy Board is looking at the whole concept of sending dilbit to tidal waters on the Pacific, and we still do not know what will happen to it.

Can the minister identify what additional funding measures of a regulatory or monitoring enforcement or liability management type the federal government is taking to manage the unique risks associated with dilbit spills?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, first let me say to the member opposite—and he should know this—that one does not get a result in the middle of a scientific study. One waits until the scientific study is completed. We know that the NDP anticipates results. I did not think that the member opposite did as well.

Let me tell the member that we have moved forward with eight more steps that will bring us closer to a world-class marine safety system. One is more tanker inspections. All foreign tankers in Canadian waters will be inspected on first arrival and every year after that.

I am not going to have time to complete this answer. We will expand the surveillance and monitoring of ships by air.

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, Atomic Energy of Canada quietly announced in March of this year that the expected long-term cost for cleaning up its nuclear program had surged to a total of \$6 billion, up dramatically from the \$3.6 billion currently on the books. How does the minister explain why there is such a major increase in the costs?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, this government has been ensuring diligent and responsible management of nuclear files. This includes the ongoing restructuring of AECL to put its laboratories under private sector management. As part of the preparation necessary to put this process on a firm footing, AECL has undertaken a comprehensive plan to review its waste and decommissioning plans. Using the best industry practices and accounting standards, this has led to an update of the forecast value of AECL's nuclear legacy liability, which has increased by \$2.4 million on a present value basis.

I am confident that a restructured AECL, under its new management model, will be best positioned to manage its nuclear waste and decommissioning activities in the future.

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, how many applications to appear as witnesses have been received by the National Energy Board with regard to the proposed line 9 reversal by Enbridge?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, the National Energy Board will report on that number.

Business of Supply

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, I was hoping the minister would have that information, especially since the Conservatives made changes under Bill C-38 to the eligibility of witnesses to appear in front of the National Energy Board. Certainly it is a question that is on the minds of many people because it has such important repercussions.

The latest environmental commissioner's report gave a scathing review on the federal government's and the two offshore petroleum boards' readiness for a major oil spill. Is there any funding in the estimates to fix this negligence by the minister and his government?

• (2220)

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, the person to whom the hon. member was referring is Scott Vaughan and let me quote from his report. He said:

For me, this report has been a model of cooperation with senior government officials, both in terms of working through some difficult files [but also]...in...the government accepting our recommendations...

Another comment he made was:

I don't have the slightest doubt that this government is absolutely focused on closing the gaps we've identified.

Finally, he said:

—this is how the system is supposed to work. We've identified...gaps, and the government is committed to closing them.

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, I hope there is a timetable associated with that.

The main estimates provide the decrease of \$22 million in the geo-mapping for energy and mineral program, the GEM program. Will the government allow this program to sunset after this year, despite industry support and the recommendations of the natural resources committee in its 2012 report?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, the geo-mapping for energy and minerals program commenced as a five-year \$100 million initiative as part of the government's plan to lay the foundation for sustainable economic development in the north by providing modern fundamental geo-science knowledge. Natural resource development remains at the centre of the government's economic agenda. The geo-science knowledge created by the GEM program is directly contributing to economic development objectives in Canada's north.

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Chair, during testimony at the Natural Resources committee, the deputy minister stated that the department had cut 160 positions in the department. Where did those cuts happen and how many of them were to scientists?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, as I said earlier this evening, 42% of NRCan's indeterminate employees occupied scientific or technical positions before the implementation of savings measures under budget 2012. After the resulting workforce adjustment, 43% of NRCan's indeterminate employees are occupying scientific or technical positions.

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Chair, I am pleased to rise tonight to speak during this debate. It is 10:30 p.m. here in Ottawa but it is only 7:30 back in Yukon so I hold out hope that a number of my constituents will be tuning in to watch this and it will not just be my mother. All of them will be watching, not just my mom.

I am pleased to participate in this committee of the whole debate and would like to start my comments specifically with our government's most recent budget, economic action plan 2013.

Canada has a well-earned reputation for excellence in economic and financial management and we intend to return to balanced budgets by 2015. Economic action plan 2013 builds on our economic record by taking concrete steps to position Canada for success in the 21st century global economy. Specifically, it would help Canadians obtain the skills and qualifications they need to get jobs in high demand fields; it would help manufacturers and businesses succeed in the global economy by enhancing the conditions for creating and growing business; it introduces a new building Canada plan that would lead to better roads, bridges and public transit in cities and communities all across our great nation; and it would invest in world-class research and innovation to help ensure that new ideas are developed and transferred from the lab to the marketplace.

Of course our nation does have challenges to welcome. Despite the fact that Canadian workers are among the highest educated and the best trained in the world, Canada is facing shortages of skilled labour for the coming years. For example, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce has identified Canada's skill shortages as the number one issue facing its membership. Canada's resource industries are also facing the same problem with skilled labour and trades.

To help address these issues, economic action plan 2013 sets out a practical three-point plan.

First, to ensure that Canadians are acquiring the skills that employers are seeking, the plan introduces the new Canada jobs grant that would provide \$15,000 more per person, including a maximum federal contribution of \$5,000 to be matched by provincial and territorial governments and employers. Just this past week I was pleased to host an open house consultation in my riding to speak about the jobs grant and how employers and governments can partner and shape this plan into our future so that it works to meet the needs of industry in those skill shortages.

Second, the plan would create opportunities for apprentices by working with the provinces and territories and by introducing measures that would support the use of apprentices through federal construction and maintenance contracts.

Finally, economic action plan 2013 would provide support to groups that are under-represented in the job market, such as persons with disabilities, youth, aboriginal peoples and newcomers to our country.

These groups were well represented during the consultations that took place in Yukon. They had valuable input and feedback that we are looking forward to receiving and reviewing as we move forward.

Business of Supply

Members of the House well know that Canada's abundant natural resources are pillars of our economic strength. When we take the direct and indirect impact into account, the natural resource sector represents about 20% of Canada's GDP and employs 1.6 million Canadians. The resource sector also pays more than \$30 billion per year to government coffers through taxes and royalties, which helps pay for health care, education, pensions and other critical social programs.

In the case of the energy sector, many analysts say that it has become the new engine of Canada's economy. The oil sands alone are responsible for some 275,000 direct and indirect jobs in skilled trades, manufacturing, high technology and financial services in every single region of Canada. According to the Canadian Energy Research Institute, projected increases in oil sands production could support close to 630,000 jobs on average between now and 2035. The institute also forecasts that the oil sands could contribute more than \$2.8 trillion to Canada's GDP, an annual average of \$113 billion during that same period.

This is great news for all Canadian workers and their families, but while our resources are great and many, unless we can ensure that they will reach foreign markets and obtain world prices, we will not meet our full potential as a nation.

• (2225)

Those who think that pipelines are an Alberta issue should think again. Getting pipelines built west, south and east to send our oil and natural gas to the United States, to Asia and to other world markets is a national priority for this government. Few countries are generating natural resource products on the scale or pace of Canada. As many as 600 major resource projects worth more than \$650 billion are under way or planned over the next decade, with the potential to create enormous prosperity for Canada, realizing the potential of our natural resources industries is critical to our government's goals of jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. That is why our government is so focused on creating the right conditions for success.

Through our plan for responsible resource development, we have set firm beginning to end timelines for project reviews. We are also eliminating duplication in the review process where provincial reviews meet our stringent environmental standards.

In Yukon, natural resources development projects have seen the benefit of regulatory reform through devolution. The 2003 Yukon Northern Affairs program devolution agreement brought management and the administration of all the lands and resources under the control of the government of the Yukon. The Hon. Michael Miltenberger referred to Yukon as a prime example of how timelines and the responsiveness of project reviews improved because of this important regulatory reform.

In addition, the former president of the Yukon Chamber of Commerce, Sandy Babcock, had reported to the Natural Resources committee that Yukon's cap of \$3 million in resource revenue sharing needed to be increased so the territorial government received a greater share of its resource royalties.

The Government of Canada listened. Last summer, during the northern tour, the Prime Minister announced a new resource revenue sharing agreement, doubling the cap to \$6 million. Recently, the

premier of Yukon, Darrell Pasloski, outlined that this made for an additional sharing of \$2.7 million to the territory.

However, our plan is not just about developing resources efficiently; it is about developing them responsibly. Our government is committed to developing our natural resources in a responsible way, which includes strengthening environmental protection. We reject the notion that we cannot do both at the same time. Through our actions, including tough new fines for companies that break our environmental laws and new measures to ensure world-class pipeline and marine safety regimes, we are proving we can.

Our government is also making every effort to ensure that aboriginal people and first nations people can share in the tremendous benefits that natural resources development offers in the years ahead. Earlier this month, Natural Resources Canada funded \$500,000 to a consortium led by the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations to pursue the study of a potential power generation plant fed by biomass in Haines Junction. This project was included among 56 new innovative clean energy projects announced by the Prime Minister, representing an investment of \$86 million through the Government of Canada's eco-energy innovation initiative. This program was created to invest in new clean energy technologies that would create jobs, generate economic opportunities and help protect the environment.

I was certainly pleased to be in Yukon to make that very important funding announcement and I can assure members that it was exceptionally well received by the people of the territory and the first nation of the Champagne and Aishihik in that community.

The significance of the resource sector's economic impact cannot be understated. In 2012, 32,000 aboriginal people, or 8.3% of the working aboriginal population, were employed in the natural resources industries of forestry, energy and mining. Aboriginal people make up 7.5% of the workforce in Canada's mining sector.

However, the minerals and metal sector is not the only sector offering opportunities for aboriginal people. Ten per cent of the oil sands workforce is aboriginal. Many aboriginal companies are also thriving in Alberta's oil patch. The Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business estimates that oil sand companies do \$1.3 billion worth of business each year, with a wide range of aboriginal companies, including parts suppliers, mechanical contractors and camp caterers.

Business of Supply

Given the scope of aboriginal business activities and employment, the council has named the oil sands as the largest single non-governmental source of aboriginal income in Canada. This degree of participation in Canada's resource economy is a substantial achievement and one that our government wishes to expand on across the country.

To that end, we are committed to working in concert with aboriginal communities to ensure they continue to share the rewards of natural resources development in Canada.

● (2230)

The committee on natural resources recommended this past year that the Government of Canada increase its support to mining training initiatives for first nation and Inuit communities in order to help develop the labour force required to support mining projects in northern Canada. Their contributions are vital to the mining sector, and these recommendations seek to further their impact. As members know, economic growth, job creation and prosperity for all Canadians is our government's top priority.

In conclusion, our government has designed and implemented policies aimed at driving the economy to its full potential for the benefit of all Canadians. Together the initiatives in economic action plan 2013 build on previous government actions to reinforce the fundamental strengths of the Canadian economy. By staying the course, the Government of Canada will continue to promote economic growth, job creation and long-term prosperity for all Canadians.

I would now like to ask the minister, along the vein of much of my discussion today, about the benefits for aboriginal and first nation communities in resource development, specifically in my riding of Yukon. Because we know that northerners, including our aboriginal people, first nations and Inuit, are an integral part of resource development in the north, I would like to ask what our government is doing to ensure that they are able to benefit from the opportunities that resource development provides.

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the member for Yukon very much for his insightful and moving remarks, and also for his very relevant question.

The natural resource sector is the largest private employer of aboriginal peoples in Canada. In 2012, more than 32,000 aboriginal people worked in the sector, which is 8.3% of all aboriginals employed in Canada, with 13,500 in the energy sector, 10,200 in minerals and metals, and 8,500 in the forestry sector.

Over the next 10 years, more than 600 major projects representing over \$650 billion in potential new investments are planned across Canada. Most of this development is located on or near aboriginal communities, and much of it is located in northern Canada.

To further enable aboriginal peoples to take advantage of these opportunities, budget 2013 would provide over \$600 million to support aboriginal education, skills development and community infrastructure. These efforts will ensure that aboriginal Canadians can share in the tremendous benefits offered by the development of our natural resources.

● (2235)

Mr. Ryan Leef: Mr. Chair, the north has been a particular focus for our government since taking power, and it can be argued that there has not been as much emphasis on the north and our great territory since the Diefenbaker government, which is something my constituents are very grateful for. Whether it is Yukon, Northwest Territories or Nunavut, we have certainly been investing in infrastructure and in responsible development of our resources.

Can the minister talk a bit about the strong support that our government has shown, as well as the economic potential for the north?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, our government has shown strong support for the north. We signed a revised royalty sharing agreement between our government and the Government of Yukon.

Throughout the north, mining projects are providing well-paying jobs for Canadians. There are nine producing mines in the north, including Yukon's own Minto. This one, Wolverine and Keno Hill, are providing opportunities for thousands of Canadians today, and 24 advanced natural resource projects representing more than \$20 billion in investments have the potential to provide opportunities for thousands more.

We established the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency, which will help with this development. Earlier this year, we opened its permanent headquarters—not, I might add, in Ottawa or Gatineau, but in Iqaluit. One of its most important responsibilities is the northern projects management office. As in the south, we want to ensure a single window for industry in dealing with government.

We need thorough, balanced, science-based environmental assessments conducted on a timely basis and in accord with the principle of one project, one review so that opportunities like this one can be realized across the north in a responsible manner.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Chair, I will be using my full 15 minutes for questions.

On how many occasions have the minister or senior officials travelled to the United States to discuss Canada's oil sands with U.S. federal or state officials in the past 18 months?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, I am proud to say that I and a number of my cabinet colleagues have travelled to the United States. I have travelled to Chicago, Houston, New York and Washington. We are promoting a Canadian environmental and development interest. We are conveying our responsible development of resources, and we are promoting projects that would create jobs in Canada, across the country.

Business of Supply

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, how much was the departmental budget for travel, accommodation, staffing support and materials related to oil sands-related travel to the United States in each of the past seven years?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, I am really astonished that the NDP would bring up this subject because its members have travelled to the United States to thwart development. They have travelled to the United States to undermine our projects that are going to create jobs and economic growth. What a waste of money that has been.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, perhaps we will try this question. How many times has the minister or senior staff visited the United States in the last 18 months to discuss the Keystone XL pipeline proposal?

• (2240)

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, as I said, I am proud of every visit that I have made to promote Canadian jobs, and frankly we are very pleased with the progress. There is 70% of the American public who are onside with Keystone. All the governors to whose states the pipeline would go are in favour of it. A majority of the Senate and a majority of the members of the House of Representatives are in favour of it.

However, the members opposite go down there, using taxpayer money, to undermine our message.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, perhaps I could ask how many visits they have had to discuss energy efficiency and renewable power, but instead I will ask this question. What has been the departmental budget for promotional communications and government relations work in European Union countries since 2009?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, I have dealt with that number. However, again, what we are doing is standing up for Canada's interests against an unscientific, discriminatory objective which undermines Canadian jobs.

What I find astonishing is that this party would have—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, it is hard to speak when there is a constant cacophony from the other side.

The Chair: We could have some order. All it is doing is taking up more time, on both sides.

The minister will have one more attempt and then we will go back to questions.

Hon. Joe Oliver: The point I was making about the fuel quality directive is that this is a discriminatory policy which does not achieve and cannot achieve its environmental objective. It discriminates against Canadian interests and also undermines European competitiveness. What is the response from the NDP? It is to take—

The Chair: Order, please.

The hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, how many lobbying events have been organized by the Canadian government on oil sands and European fuel quality directives since 2009?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, the point I was making is that Canada strongly opposes any measures that would unfairly discriminate against oil sands crude in a way that is unscientific. If unjustified and discriminatory measures to implement the FQD are ultimately put in place, Canada would consider all options to defend its interests. The fact that the opposition is presenting a proposal directly opposed to Canadian interests undermines our prospects of getting things changed.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, the simple answer is over 110.

Did the department participate in the creation of the pan-European oil sands advocacy strategy?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, I find it odd that there is a kind of accusatory tone that if we make an effort to defend Canada's interests there is somehow something wrong with that. Actually, the opposite is the case. We are defending Canada's interests and members on the other side inexplicably are opposed to job creation in Canada.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, has the minister or senior staff attended any meetings related to the development or implementation of the pan-European oil sands advocacy strategy?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, again, when NDP members go to a foreign country they advocate against Canadian interests and Canadian jobs. Canadians expect their government to advocate for their jobs. We will see what their reaction is and we have seen what the reaction is when an NDP government out west decided to oppose all forms of development. The answer is in and the members from the other side ought to take note.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, are any Natural Resources Canada staff presently seconded to the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade? If yes, how many, what is their mandate and which countries are they working in?

• (2245)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, I will try to answer in French.

Canada supports the adoption of measures aimed at tangibly reducing global greenhouse gas emissions. However, as drafted, the proposed fuel quality directive will not reduce greenhouse gas emissions and will harm the European Union's economy, especially the refining industry.

The fuel quality directive is a non-scientific and discriminatory approach aimed at reducing—

The Chair: Order. The hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, how many climate science briefings did the minister receive in the past year?

Business of Supply

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, I receive briefings continually from my department. Those briefings include scientific information. We have thousands of scientists working in NRCan and we take their conclusions very seriously. For example, the conclusion that the diluted bitumen is not more corrosive than light crude going through pipelines.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, given these briefings, does the minister agree that current levels of exposure and sensitivity to climate-related changes, as well as limitations in adaptive capacity, make some northern systems and populations particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, as I have said many times, climate change is a serious issue. There is no dispute about the science of climate change and our government is determined to take action. Where we disagree with the opposition is on the policy response. We take very seriously the views of science when they are talking about science.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, of course, the climate-related impacts have been documented in the Natural Resources Canada report in 2007. Could the minister detail specific measures his department is taking to assess the impacts of these vulnerabilities?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, through our budget, our government has renewed domestic climate change adaptation funding. This was an almost \$150-million investment over five years. Natural Resources would receive \$35 million to enhance competitiveness in a changing climate with this new funding. NRCan is working with provinces and territories, industry and professional organizations to develop the knowledge and tools to adapt their operations and services to the effects of a changing climate. Examples include a protocol to assess infrastructure vulnerability currently being applied to the highways in British Columbia and at Pearson airport in Toronto; tools, such as mapping permafrost hazards to inform the development of new mines, roads and ports in the north; compiling natural resource sector-specific business cases have been highlighted—

The Chair: The hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, that is finally a bit of an answer.

Does the minister believe that the global annual average temperature is rising?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, what I have said repeatedly is that climate change is a serious issue. There is no dispute about the science of climate change and the need for action.

Let me just add this. James Hansen and other scientists have acknowledged that, fortunately, the pace of global warming has recently slowed. However, and this is absolutely critical, we must continue to address our efforts to growing global GHG emissions.

Where we disagree is not on the science. Where we disagree with the opposition is on the policy response.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, does the minister believe that climate change has been caused by human activity?

• (2250)

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, I have said yes many times.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, does the minister agree with the statement that a 2° average global temperature increase is a tipping

point for destructive and possibly catastrophic climate change impacts?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, we are of a belief that a significant change in climate would be deleterious.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, between 2001 and 2010, global temperatures averaged .46° centigrade above the 1961-1990 average and were the highest ever recorded for a 10-year period since the beginning of instrumental climate records.

Does the minister believe that this is an indication that climate change is occurring?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, I have answered the question repeatedly. I do not know what all this belief business is about. We have said that climate change is a pressing global problem, and we are acting to deal with it. The nature of our policy response is different from that of the opposition parties.

We believe that we can deal with climate change and environmental challenges and at the same time develop our resources in a responsible way. What is at stake here, on both issues, is a tremendous opportunity for the Canadian population to benefit from the development of our resources and for Canada to be a reliable source of energy for the entire world.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, a study in the journal *Environmental Research Letters* analyzed 4,000 summaries of peer-reviewed papers in journals giving a view of climate change since the early 1900s and found that 97% said that it was mainly caused by humans. It was the biggest review, so far, of scientific opinion on climate change and showed a clear consensus.

Does the minister agree that there is a scientific consensus that climate change is real and largely man-made?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, I have answered the question so many times, I am not going to answer it anymore.

What I would like to talk about is that those who keep denigrating Canada's record are just plain wrong, and they should know better. Canada has aligned its goals in greenhouse gas emissions with the United States and is calling for a 17% reduction by 2020.

Our government has invested more per capita than the U.S. on clean energy. That is an important point that is not well known.

Business of Supply

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, can the minister tell the House what the projected growth of oil sands carbon emissions will be by 2020?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, the NDP would impose a job-crippling, \$21-billion carbon tax that would increase costs to consumers, with no positive impact on the environment.

Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Chair, it is a real honour to be able to participate in this critical debate tonight. I will be using ten minutes to speak, leaving five minutes for questions at the end.

Today I would like to focus on market diversification and the hurdles we need to surmount as Canadians in order to put our natural resources to the highest and best use for the benefit of the entire country. Our government is working hard to pursue the responsible development of our resources, hand in hand with protecting our environment. I will explain more about that in a minute.

First, to set the scene, the problem that Canadians face is that we are currently selling our resources too cheaply. In fact, last year alone we lost \$6 billion in my home province of Alberta. According to CIBC, we stand to lose \$27 billion in federal and provincial taxes and royalties every year, not to mention lost jobs in every single province in Canada, because of the lack of access to international markets.

That is \$50 million every day, and that \$50 million is a loss for every child and every grandchild, and every woman and man in Canada, because our resources are landlocked. That money could be going right now to pay for schools and hospitals, roads and bridges and child care. Instead, Canadians are subsidizing schools and hospitals, roads and bridges and child care in the United States, while they pay us \$20 billion to \$30 billion below the world price for oil.

There are proposals to build pipelines, as we have heard, to the south, the west, the east and to the north coast of Canada to tidewater, where we will have international market access. I would like to applaud those who are showing leadership in this regard.

Firstly, I would like to applaud British Columbians. We can all celebrate the decision by British Columbians, who in last week's election realized that natural resource development is the key to their future. British Columbians showed us that when people get the facts they make the right decision.

The Northwest Territories government has added a healthy sense of competition by opening the door to a pipeline to the north. The Metis Settlements General Council has just signed an agreement with the Alberta government so that they can develop natural resources in their province. Additionally, aboriginals in several other provinces have signed agreements to benefit from jobs and investment.

Quebec premier Pauline Marois said she would welcome a pipeline extension to the east, to allow Quebec refineries like Suncor and Ultramar to stay competitive, with better access to Canadian oil supplies where other Quebec refineries have closed.

Many union voices are joining this chorus. At committee in the last few weeks, we have heard definitive testimony from the

Canadian energy and paperworkers in Montreal and the AFL-CIO in central and eastern Canada. Just today, the united association of journeymen and apprentices said that pipelines, such as line 9 from Sarnia to Montreal and the proposed west-east pipeline to St. John, will keep refineries competitive in Ontario, Quebec and New Brunswick, and will provide new, well-paying jobs. They want our federal government to enable industry to create those jobs and to provide stability into the future.

Quebec's top import in 2012 was crude oil. The lack of a pipeline from west to east meant that Quebecers were paying a higher world oil price to import the highest percentage of their oil from, guess where, Algeria. That is right. A recent CERI survey showed that a majority of Quebecers said they would rather be buying their oil from Canada.

New Brunswick Premier David Alward is throwing out the welcome mat to bring Albertan and Saskatchewan oil to his province, where Canada has its largest refinery along with a deepwater port to provide ready access to world markets.

What is more is that there is a new urgency to do this, since world supply has shifted dramatically in recent months. Suddenly Canada's oil suppliers are bottlenecked by a lack of pipelines and the world is seeing vast quantities of shale gas and oil being discovered daily. These are going to compete with us for the world markets that we could be serving. India, China, Africa, Latin America and the United States all have found abundant supplies of non-conventional gas and oil.

• (2255)

The early bird will get the worm. However, the Liberals and the NDP, shockingly including the NDP's only Alberta member from Edmonton—Strathcona who is working against her province's primary industry, are opposing our access to international markets and putting Canada at risk of being left out in the cold.

Many of our competitors can develop their resources in a far less environmentally sound manner than Canada. Last year, China's growth more than ate up all of the GHG emission reductions of Canada and the U.S. Dr. Jack Mintz recently reported that in the *National Post*. The planet will suffer and China's citizens, not ours, will reap the economic benefits, while we literally run the risk of missing the boat to China and losing out on billions in revenue that could be in the pockets of Canadians.

However, all is not lost. I talked earlier about British Columbians showing us that when intelligent people get the facts they make the right decision. What are the facts?

Business of Supply

Canadians justifiably want to be assured that the environment and the economy can work together to benefit us all and enhance our quality of life. Let me tell the House what is being done in the area of resource development to protect our environment for future generations.

Industry is dramatically reducing its water usage in the oil sands. It used to take eight barrels of water to produce a barrel of oil and that ratio has been cut in half to four. Water is now recycled four times on average and in some cases six times, a world-leading benchmark.

Greenhouse gas emissions from the oil sands have dropped 25% per barrel of oil produced with our government's strong guidance. Just two weeks ago, we saw a significant leap forward in technological advancement. Imperial Oil began production from its Kearl oil sands plant near Fort McMurray, the first plant to produce a barrel of oil with a comparable greenhouse gas emission level to an average refinery in the U.S. A study by the Colorado-based industry analysis firm IHS shows Kearl will produce a barrel of oil at a life cycle GHG emission level below that of California heavy oil.

That should be a game changer for people, busting the myth of the anti-jobs, no development party over there and the notion of the oil sands being dirty when in fact the oil sands can produce with the same GHGs as conventional oil. Kearl is the first plant to reach that mark, but it clearly shows the groundbreaking environmental benchmarks that Canadian companies are reaching through high-tech advances.

Canada has also spawned world-leading green tech companies leading the charge for sustainable energy development and environmental responsibility. Tervita Corporation in my own riding of Calgary Centre is just one example. Tailings ponds used to take 17 years to be reclaimed. Now that time is down to two to five years and in some cases just months.

CTV *Power Play*'s Don Martin even announced last week that the oil sands had cleaned up their act tremendously. In fact, it is worth telling Canadians that only 5 of the 101 projects under way in the oil sands in 2012 were mines. The rest were underground in situ projects. Therefore, members can see why we talk about the myths being perpetuated by the opposition.

Our government has also doubled pipeline inspections in the recent budget and put in place mandatory guidelines for double-hulled tankers that are piloted through our waters to ensure that Canada keeps its over 99.9996% pipeline safety record.

Unfortunately, the NDP members voted against all these measures. They might be asking themselves why B.C. rejected the NDP.

Our knowledgeable and competent natural resources minister has noted that, compared to other countries, we meet or exceed the very best safety records and world-class standards for environmental care. We have toughened our strong penalties for violators, which include the polluter-pay principle.

While the opposition over there huffs and puffs and belches black smoke about our energy industry, scaremongers both at home and in Washington and strives to halt development, the Conservatives know

that the industry can and is co-existing very happily with the environment.

● (2300)

We are not finished yet, but Canada has already achieved half the GHG reduction levels to meet its Copenhagen targets by 2020, and this is in stark contrast with the Liberals, as greenhouse gas levels rose 30% under their watch.

Finally, I will leave everyone with the environmental moral cause for shipping oil and gas westward from Canada to China. The School of Public Policy's Jack Mintz, Maria van der Hoeven of the International Energy Agency and Dr. Wenran Jiang of the Asia Pacific Foundation all point out Canada is uniquely positioned to assist China in getting off its dependence on coal-fired power by supplying it with clean fossil fuels like oil and liquefied natural gas.

Mr. Chair, thank you for allowing me to break down some of the myths surrounding development of Canada's miraculous natural resources. Facts surmount fear every time.

Two weeks ago, I had the opportunity to attend with the hon. Minister of State for Science and Technology the launch of the Algal carbon conversion pilot project to be built near Cold Lake, Alberta by Pond Biofuels and CNRL, an oil sands leader. This pilot will not only reduce the carbon emissions of CNRL's oil sands operation in Primrose by 15% to 30%, it is actually going to turn carbon dioxide into a safe, marketable biomass. Bringing this idea to market will benefit all Canadians.

I bring this up because it is one of the newest examples of how Canadian industry, with the strongest encouragement and new regulations put in place by our government, is bridging technology gaps to produce our natural resources more cleanly. It is one of the examples of the interests of energy and the environment merging, growing Canada's economy and benefiting all Canadians, breaking the myths being perpetuated by the opposition.

With this in mind, I would like to ask the parliamentary secretary what our government is doing to further encourage the decrease in emissions from natural resources development.

● (2305)

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Chair, obviously we work with partners and in collaboration with those partners, our government has made substantial investments in clean technology and industry. For example, \$590 million in funding has gone toward Sustainable Development Technology Canada, which has leveraged a \$1.6-billion investment. That is a ratio of \$3 of investment for every \$1 that has been contributed by taxpayers.

Business of Supply

Economic action plan 2013 allocates \$325 million over eight years in funding for SDTC and that signals our continuing commitment to energy and environmental innovation. The new funding means that the government's total investment in the SDTC tech fund is \$950 million to date. Eco-energy innovation is investing \$268 million over five years for clean energy demonstration and research and development projects. This will include investments in smart grid and renewable energy in carbon capture and storage in energy-efficient buildings and environmental aspects of oil sands.

The eco-energy for biofuels program will make a total investment of over \$1 billion by 2017 to encourage the expansion of the domestic biofuels industry. Everyone can see that we are doing much to encourage the decrease in emissions from development through clean tech funds and new technology.

Ms. Joan Crockatt: Mr. Chair, one of the hurdles to market diversification is misinformation from the opposition. Both the NDP and Liberals have been engaging in this and our Conservative government is the only party in the House standing up for the environment and the economy.

Canadians and, indeed, all residents of the planet need to know what is happening. I would like to ask the minister what our government is doing to ensure that resources in Canada are developed with the highest degree of environmental protection.

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, I will speak about the oil sands monitoring program that our government, in partnership with the Province of Alberta, has introduced. I am pleased to say that by the time the three-year plan is implemented in 2015, water monitoring sites will increase from 21 to over 40, air sites will increase from 21 to over 30, and biodiversity wildlife contaminant sampling will increase from 3 to 25.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Chair, I will use my entire 15 minutes to ask questions.

First of all, what portion of the department's \$16.5 million advertising budget is dedicated to promoting Canada's renewable energy sector?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, I have answered the question a few times. However, as I said, I believe the total amount is \$600,000. It is \$16.5 million in total, but we are talking about advertising.

An amount is set aside for promoting the Keystone project in the United States. We launched the project because it will create jobs in Canada, as well as create economic activity and revenue so that governments can support social programs.

• (2310)

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Chair, my question was about the portion of the advertising budget that was for renewable energy, not oil sands.

[English]

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, the program, as I mentioned, is devoted to the issues that will create jobs and economic growth in Canada.

[Translation]

These investments increase our capacity to compete globally and create jobs for Canada. The investments—

The Chair: The hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Chair, I assume from this non-answer that there is no budget for renewable energies. I have another question.

What proportion of the department's budget is devoted to developing a national energy strategy in co-operation with the provinces and territories?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, since 2006, our government has invested more than \$10 billion in order to reduce emissions and protect our environment through investment in green infrastructure, energy efficiency, clean energy technologies and the production of cleaner energy and fuel.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Chair, according to last year's public accounts, \$90 million was allocated to the clean energy fund, and \$45 million of that amount went to Shell Canada.

Can the minister explain why a fund designated for promoting the transition toward clean energy is being used to finance the big oil companies?

[English]

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, the question shows a misunderstanding of where the money is allocated. We are devoting significant amounts of money to carbon capture and storage, and we are doing that in co-operation with companies, because that is the way to do it.

Our government is a world leader in carbon capture and storage. I was up at the Scotford upgrader project, where our government is investing some \$120 million in a project in which the Government of Alberta is putting in \$700 million, I believe. That will reduce greenhouse gas emissions by some 45%.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Chair, I do not think that giving half the green funds budget to a major oil company will help ensure that things improve on this front.

Sustainable Development Technology Canada estimates needing \$100 million a year to handle green energy development needs. Despite the investment within the framework of the recent budget, there is still a \$60 million shortfall annually.

Will the minister call on his government to fill this gap?

[English]

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, the fact that the NDP votes against carbon capture and storage is somewhat inexplicable, given their pretended concern about the environment.

Business of Supply

In collaboration with partners, the government is also investing in clean technology through the funding of Sustainable Development Technology Canada, SDTC, which has leveraged significant money, and we have just announced an additional \$325 million in funding for SDTC, signalling our commitment to energy and environmental innovation. New funding means that the government's total investment in the SDTC tech fund is \$950 million to date.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Chair, according to the International Energy Agency, clean energy solutions are not being implemented fast enough. Has the minister read this report?

[English]

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, I have read that report, and I have also read the conclusion by the International Energy Agency that 62% of energy in 25 years will come from hydrocarbons, even with the most optimistic possible view of renewable energy. The NDP has voted against all of our measures for a cleaner environment.

• (2315)

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Speaker, that does not justify doing nothing.

The agency points out that the large market failures are preventing the adoption of these solutions; not many green solutions have been implemented; policies need to address the energy system as a whole; and energy-related research, development and demonstration need to accelerate. Does the minister agree?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, the ecoENERGY innovation initiative is investing \$268 million over five years to fund clean energy demonstration and R&D projects. This includes investments in intelligent energy networks and renewable energy, carbon capture and storage, energy efficient buildings and the environmental aspects of the oil sands.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Chair, speaking of ecoENERGY, can the minister confirm that, since the end of the ecoENERGY for renewable power program, the minister no longer has a major program to facilitate direct funding for major renewable energy development projects?

[English]

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, through the ecoENERGY for renewable power program, the department is investing \$1.4 million over 14 years to support 104 renewable energy projects, representing 4,458 megawatts of capacity in areas such as wind, solar and bioenergy.

The government is actively supporting the lower Churchill River hydro project in Newfoundland and Labrador, a major investment in clean energy infrastructure that will benefit the entire region of Atlantic Canada.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Chair, the problem is that this program was abolished by the Conservatives.

Still on the topic of the ecoENERGY home retrofit program, did the department stop accepting applications in January 2012 before the \$400 million was completely disbursed?

[English]

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, the NDP has voted against all our measures for a cleaner environment. Those members have opposed the \$325 million over eight years for sustainable development technology. They have opposed the ecoENERGY for homes program. They have opposed our measures to make Canada more energy efficient through our ecoENERGY initiative. They have opposed our measures to make pipelines safer with 50% more inspections and double the number of audits.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Chair, the minister is still avoiding the question, but I am going to ask it again. What proportion of the \$400 million ecoENERGY budget was not used?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, the ecoENERGY home retrofit program that the hon. member mentioned created jobs across Canada and helped homeowners save an average of 20% on their home energy use. The over 640,000 homeowners who received grants from the federal government starting in 2007 are now saving over \$400 million on their annual energy bills.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Chair, if this program is so effective, why was it abolished before all the money was spent? I am going to give the answer that the minister is hiding from us. On December 4, 2012, department employees told the Standing Committee on Natural Resources that the department had spent \$185 million. There is therefore \$215 million remaining.

An hon. member: Shame.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Yes, it is fairly shameful.

Can the minister tell us whether the rest of the money will be used to help Canadians renovate their houses in order to make them more energy efficient? If not, what will that money be used for?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, our government made wise use of taxpayers' hard-earned money while encouraging Canadians to make energy-saving choices. The program stopped accepting new applications in January 2011, when the goal of 250,000 applications was reached, in order to ensure that money would be available to fully respond to all future requests. We extended this program many times. In fact, we invested seven times the amount that was first announced in 2007.

• (2320)

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Chair, cutting \$285 million is not exactly what I would call being prudent. I call that being irresponsible.

Business of Supply

The minister still has not answered my question. What is that \$285 million going to be used for?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, as I said, in order to ensure prudent management in times of fiscal restraint, we used historical trends concerning assessments done before and after the renovations combined with average payouts to each household. We are using the money saved to benefit Canadians.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Chair, if he were any more evasive, he would disappear altogether.

The government has set a goal of generating 90% of Canada's electricity from zero-emitting sources by 2020.

What sort of progress has been made so far?

[English]

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, the NDP would impose a job-crippling, \$21-billion carbon tax that would increase costs to consumers, with no positive impact on the environment. While New Democrats talk about a tax that would hurt consumers, they stand in opposition to every form of resource development.

[Translation]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Chair, I will repeat the question.

What sort of progress has been made so far on the goal of zero-emitting sources by 2020?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, regarding the eco-energy initiative, here are some examples of our investments: in Ontario, \$466 million for 47 projects; in Quebec, nearly \$200 million for 10 projects; in British Columbia, \$305 million for 19 projects; in Alberta, \$166 million for eight projects—

The Chair: Order. The hon. member for Beauharnois—Salaberry has nearly one minute remaining to finish her questions.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Chair, can the minister tell us his department's responsibilities in relation to shale gas?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, shale gas is an area of provincial jurisdiction.

It is in the Constitution, and the provinces decide individually. British Columbia has decided to develop shale gas and Quebec has launched an environmental study. The Government of Canada is committed to safe, responsible and sustainable development of our country's natural resources, including shale gas.

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach: Mr. Chair, for the minister's information, Natural Resources Canada provides geoscientific information that is used to make decisions related to exploration, resource management and environmental protection.

Is the minister aware of the negative effects hydraulic fracking has on the environment?

Hon. Joe Oliver: Mr. Chair, as I said, this is an area of provincial jurisdiction.

A recent special report from the International Energy Agency concluded that the technology and expertise exist to produce shale gas in a way that will not harm the environment, and we know that—

[English]

The Chair: The time is up. The hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources will have approximately six minutes before we are out of time.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Chair, I share the opposition members' enthusiasm for the minister's performance here tonight. It has been great. We want to thank the minister for sharing his evening with us in such an effective way.

I also would like to acknowledge Mr. Dupont and Mr. Arora for the time that they have spent here tonight and the expertise that they bring on this file as well, and I know there are other people who have worked hard to present the natural resources case for this country.

I also want to acknowledge my colleagues who have spent the evening here with us. Most of them have spoken and have spoken extremely well. I think of the chair of the natural resources committee; the member for Vegreville—Wainwright; my colleague from Tobique—Mactaquac; my friend from Wetaskiwin, who spoke a bit earlier; the member for Saskatoon—Humboldt; the member for Yukon, who even sent a “hi” out to his mother there; and the member for Calgary Centre, who spoke so effectively.

I also want to acknowledge the member for Blackstrap, who has been here with us all night tonight because resources are important to Saskatchewan. She is an important member of the cabinet and an important member from Saskatchewan. It is great that she was able to be with us as well.

We have been talking about numbers all night tonight, and there are some numbers that I find a bit disquieting and intriguing. We have talked about the 630,000 jobs that are projected to be created by the oil sands over the next 25 years and the hundreds of thousands of other jobs that are going to be created by the resources sector across this country. Unfortunately, again tonight it seems that we have heard the New Democrats say one more time that they want to say no to those jobs.

It bothers me, when I come from a resource-based province, to hear that kind of thing. As I mentioned earlier, it seems that they oppose everything about natural resources. We heard the member for Edmonton—Strathcona, from Alberta, the province where the oil sands are so important, who came in here and opposed oil sands. We heard my colleague from Calgary Centre talk about the Kearl project and how those greenhouse gas emissions now are similar to what is being produced from regular oil production. Certainly the opposition members should be welcoming that news, but they do not seem to be willing to do so.

We have heard in the past how they have opposed offshore. They do not like offshore and the development of offshore. We hear how they do not like pipelines. Some of them do not like pipelines and some of them seem to. They keep changing their position. I had to appreciate my colleague this afternoon in what seemed to be grudging support for the west-to-east pipeline, although last week his leader changed his own position on that, so we wish them luck in trying to convince their leader that he actually needs to represent all of Canada and just not small interest groups in particular areas across this country.

We are concerned, as I read in a quote a bit earlier, that the NDP opposes all things nuclear. The New Democrats' leader was straightforward about that here in the House. He said that they are just going to oppose it. I can hear my colleague across the way saying that they of course oppose that, that they certainly do oppose that.

There is shale gas, the latest and greatest development around the world that is going to change the way energy is produced and used on this globe, and the New Democrats again come up dead against it.

We also see their opposition in so many ways to mining across this country. My colleague from Yukon and other colleagues from the north are particularly concerned about their opposition up there as they try to develop their economies and begin to get some of the same advantages that the rest of us have.

It was interesting to hear about the impact that the development of natural resources will have on our aboriginal communities. Those of us from the west, and particularly from Saskatchewan, know that we need to get our young aboriginal people involved in the economy and that probably the quickest and best way to do that is through the resource sector. It pains me to have to ask again why the New Democrats stand so strongly against that when it is so important in so much of our country.

At the natural resources committee today we were excited to hear from some folks from Montreal who were talking about the importance of the west-to-east pipeline and the re-reversal of that pipeline so that it can create opportunities in Quebec and further east,

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as far east as my colleague from New Brunswick. He looks forward to having some of those opportunities as well.

I wanted to talk about the New Democrats' great commitment to the carbon tax and the \$20 billion that it would take out of Canadians' pockets. We have not mentioned much about that tonight, and they certainly do not want to bring it up anymore.

However, we look forward to continuing to be the government in this country, continuing to develop resources across this country, continuing under the great leadership of the Minister of Natural Resources, and being able to do that in spite of what the New Democrats want to do to our resource communities, our resource jobs and so much of our resource-based economy.

● (2325)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: It being 11:30 p.m., all votes are deemed to have been reported pursuant to Standing Order 81(4). The committee will rise, and I will now leave the chair.

● (2330)

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: This House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 11:30 p.m.)

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