



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Wednesday, November 20, 2013**

—

**Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, November 20, 2013

The House met at 2 p.m.

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*Prayers*

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• (1400)

[*English*]

**The Speaker:** It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem, led by the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

### CHRISTMAS SEASON IN OXFORD

**Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to spread some Christmas cheer. This past weekend I had the privilege of participating in Santa Claus parades across my riding of Oxford. There were many creative floats from organizations, businesses, churches, and schools that provided non-stop excitement and entertainment for the crowd. I would like to congratulate everyone involved for a job well done.

Christmas is also the season of giving. At this year's parades, the residents of Oxford really pulled together and embraced the spirit of giving to support local food and toy banks. The donations collected will help individuals and families in need to celebrate the holiday festivities with loved ones. I am proud to represent a group of communities that know the importance of giving.

This holiday season, let us all remember those in need and give generously.

In conclusion, I would like to wish all a joyous, safe, and happy holiday season.

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[*Translation*]

### UNIVERSAL CHILDREN'S DAY

**Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of my caucus, I have the honour to talk about Universal Children's Day. History has demonstrated just how

important children are in our lives, and we have come a long way since the days when children had practically no rights.

On November 20, 1959, the United Nations adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, and today we are celebrating the 54th anniversary of that declaration as well as the 24th anniversary of the signing of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by 191 countries.

Respecting the rights of the child is a collective responsibility. Keep in mind that even a child's right to food is not guaranteed everywhere in the world; it is not even guaranteed everywhere in our own country. Children have the right to live in a healthy and safe environment, and it is up to us to make that happen. It is our responsibility to ensure their rights are respected.

Adults across the country, let us take the time today to tell our children that we love them and to ensure that the rights of children everywhere are respected. Speak up when you see a child being mistreated; yell when that same child is a victim of violence, abuse, trafficking or forced labour. Everyone has the right to their childhood.

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• (1405)

[*English*]

### IRAN

**Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it was 1980. Saddam was the threat. Israel was pleading for the world to take action. Iraq was building high-grade nuclear reactors, scouring the world for sources of uranium ore and attempting to obtain hot cells capable of producing plutonium.

In 1990, the world responded to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, and Desert Storm unfolded. Courtesy of Iraq, 39 Scud missiles rained down on the region. If just one of those Scud missiles had been nuclear-armed, the world would be a different place.

Today, Iran is the nuclear threat. Crippling economic sanctions are having an effect. Israel is once again pleading with the nations not to accept anything less than a complete and verifiable dismantling of nuclear capability.

Tough diplomacy and rigorous enforcement have a slim prospect of success. Anything less than complete capitulation ensures catastrophe. The nations must remain vigilant and resolute on this matter. The cost of failure is conflict that may be impossible to contain.

*Statements by Members**[Translation]***UNIVERSAL CHILDREN'S DAY**

**Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Universal Children's Day is a time to celebrate life and young people. We feel confident about the future because our nation's children can hope for a life without violence or hate.

Despite all of our dreams and ideals, however, we have to face the reality of the lives that have been shattered by a lack of education and resources. Some children in our cities and towns do not have enough to eat. In our country of law and order, children are left defenceless. Here in this Parliament, all too often, we accept the unacceptable.

We must commit to developing structures for early childhood education and child care in order to give all Canadians a chance to be part of society, rather than excluding some from our so-called civilized world.

We must stand by children in Canada and around the world.

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**VETERANS**

**Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on Remembrance Day, I had the honour of being in Hong Kong to commemorate the hundreds of Canadians who gave their lives in the defence of freedom.

*[English]*

As a veteran myself, having served in our Canadian Armed Forces for 20 years, I have reflected upon the service that we provide to our veterans. As a member of government, I am glad that we as Conservatives have provided our veterans with an increase of nearly \$5 billion in funding since 2006. That is more money and services in the hands of our veterans. Our military personnel are well trained and hard-working. They serve our country and they deserve our support.

Recently the Minister of Veterans Affairs announced that our veterans can receive up to \$75,000 for college, university, or skilled trades certification programs. Our most seriously injured veterans receive a minimum of \$62,000 per year in total financial compensation to assist their recovery.

*[Translation]*

We will not stop there. Our veterans defended us and we will offer our support to them when they need it.

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*[English]***TRANS DAY OF REMEMBRANCE**

**Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize November 20, the Trans Day of Remembrance.

People in communities across Canada and around the world will gather today to remember victims of transphobic violence and to dedicate themselves to working to end discrimination against transgender, transsexual, and gender-variant people. Last year, more

than 238 trans people were murdered, and countless more were victims of violence and discrimination.

Once again on this Trans Day Remembrance, many of us will look back, shake our heads, and ask ourselves how such violence and discrimination could possibly still be the reality for so many people, but today we must also look forward and ask how we can make things better.

Canada needs to act now to protect the rights, freedom, and safety of trans Canadians. We need to join the Northwest Territories, Ontario, Manitoba, and Nova Scotia, which have already legislated, and soon that list will include Newfoundland and P.E.I.

New Democrats were happy to see the passage of Bill C-279 in the House of Commons on March 20, 2013, but Canadians are still waiting. We call on the Senate to act promptly and pass this legislation immediately to ensure equal rights for all—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Okanagan—Shuswap.

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● (1410)

**LEGALIZATION OF MARIJUANA**

**Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the City of Salmon Arm in my riding of Okanagan—Shuswap received funding from the municipal infrastructure improvement fund to replace the 30-year-old boiler at the local indoor pool. The new boiler is more energy efficient and less costly to maintain.

Last Saturday evening, I took seven of my 10 grandchildren to the pool. It was great to watch all the children enjoy the wholesome fun this wonderful facility provides. As I watched everyone, I thought that providing resources to communities for these types of activities for children and families is a priority of good government.

Then the thought came to me: why would any political party want to legalize marijuana, which would only destroy children's lives and families? Is it not the duty of government to protect the health and safety of its citizens?

I said a little prayer while I stood at the poolside. I petitioned that our grandchildren would never live under a government that would legalize marijuana.

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**FILIPINO ASSOCIATION FUNDRAISER**

**Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our thoughts and prayers continue to be with all those affected by the devastation of Typhoon Haiyan. With the passing of one storm, an estimated 13 million people were impacted across the Philippines, including over four million displaced and more than 4,000 who lost their lives, but so many other lives have been disrupted as well. Many Canadians had to wait days to find out about their friends and family.

Our government has been quick to respond, but the real story of compassion is found in communities across Canada.

Yesterday morning something remarkable happened in southwest Saskatchewan. Our local Filipino association, under the leadership of Emilio Completo, held a fundraiser. The response was outstanding. Local people donated \$21,458, all to be matched by our federal government's contribution.

Emilio and 50 volunteers did the work. The people responded. Emilio asks that I pass on his sincere thanks to the people of Swift Current and to all of southwestern Saskatchewan for their amazing generosity.

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#### PARLIAMENTARIAN OF THE YEAR

**Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today I rise to pay tribute to the member of Parliament for Sackville—Eastern Shore, who last night was named Parliamentarian of the Year. To pay proper respect to his unique brand of politics, I will now abandon my notes and speak as he does, from the heart.

This member has, from his earliest days, paid great respect to the people who elected him to speak on their behalf, and has mentored an entire generation of New Democrat MPs in paying attention always to the local politics, even while at the federal level.

He has also earned respect and friends on both sides of the aisle, constantly advocating that while we can be tough in politics, we can be good to one another, and it can be, from time to time, even a little bit fun.

I and many New Democrats and all those who support us across the country are proud of the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore. We brought him a little closer to the front bench today; I know it does not make him feel too comfortable, but as soon as this tribute is over, I know he will want to return to the comfort and safety of the last row of Parliament.

He has constantly shown us that politics is important, politics is always local, and politics should be done with respect, particularly when fighting for Canada's veterans.

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[Translation]

#### MYLÈNE PAQUETTE

**Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me tell you about Mylène Paquette, a young woman from Montreal who just finished rowing solo across the North Atlantic from west to east.

Ms. Paquette is a source of inspiration and a model of perseverance. She rowed her small craft over 5,000 km between Halifax and the shores of Brittany in the span of 130 days.

She tackled daily challenges and persevered. She never let natural or physical obstacles discourage her from achieving her dream.

Mylène Paquette is certainly a courageous woman who confronts danger and achieves her goals.

#### Statements by Members

We would like to wish her a warm welcome back to terra firma with her loved ones. We hope she will impart the life lessons she learned on her journey.

Anyone looking for more information on Mylène Paquette's extraordinary adventure can go to [www.mylenepaquette.com](http://www.mylenepaquette.com).

On behalf of my colleagues, congratulations, Ms. Paquette.

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[English]

#### GIRLS' EDUCATION IN AFGHANISTAN

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to share that on November 1, Calgarian Janice Eisenhauer, volunteer executive director of Canadian Women for Women in Afghanistan, was awarded the Lewis Perinbam Award for international development. The award recognizes her tireless volunteer efforts for 15 years in supporting access to education for women and girls in Afghanistan. Canadians are rightly proud of this work to raise awareness of human rights and the importance of education as a pathway to peace in Afghanistan.

This year the organization launched a new fundraising campaign, the lantern fund, based on an Afghan proverb that a teacher is the candle that burns to enlighten others. Experience has shown that when we invest in the education of female students, we contribute to the development of an entire society. The goal is to raise \$2 million over five years to sustain teacher training programs in rural Afghan communities.

Today, on the UN day of the child, I call on the government to commit to supporting this peace-building initiative through improved quality of public education for Afghan children.

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●(1415)

#### NATIONAL CHILD DAY

**Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, today marks the celebration of the Universal Children's Day and Canada's 20th annual National Child Day. I would like to take this opportunity to remind the House that the protection and welfare needs of Canadian children who are most vulnerable are a priority for our government.

Yesterday the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs responsible for Consular and the Minister of Justice launched the new vulnerable children's consular unit. This new unit includes an increased number of specialized case management officers and specialized policy advisers who will provide better support in cases like child welfare, abduction, and forced marriage. The vulnerable children's consular unit will help resolve these difficult and complex cases more quickly, it will help prevent them, and it will improve interdepartmental and federal-provincial collaboration.

We are proud of Canada's leadership status in international children's issues, and this is just another way that our Conservative government is moving forward to protect and support Canadian children and parents.

*Oral Questions***CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA**

**Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as the RCMP closes in on the former chief of staff to the Conservative Prime Minister and prepares to lay criminal charges, most senior Conservatives are only now trying to distance themselves from their old friend Nigel Wright.

When this scandal first broke and Nigel Wright allegedly resigned, Conservatives were lining up to praise him. The Minister of Industry said:

Nigel Wright is a great Canadian. Canada is stronger because of his service as Chief of Staff to our Prime Minister.

The Minister of Public Safety lamented:

Saddened by the departure of an honest and loyal public servant. Thank you Nigel for your service to our nation.

The Minister of Democratic Reform also mourned the loss of Mr. Wright. He said:

Saddened to hear of Nigel Wright's departure. He is an honourable man, and great Canadian.

When Canadians first learned about Nigel Wright's secret \$90,000 payment to Senator Duffy, applaud as they might, they are now outraged by the corruption in the PMO—

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country.

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**IRAN**

**Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the new Iranian president, Hassan Rouhani, has impressed some people around the world by showing a willingness to talk and simply not being Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. The world is hopeful that President Rouhani might usher in a new chapter of respect for human rights in Iran. However, since he came into office in August, there have been at least 125 executions carried out in Iran by the clerical regime, adding to Iran's abysmal human rights record.

I note that a Canadian-led resolution on the human rights situation in Iran passed the third committee at the United Nations yesterday. This year, 46 countries joined Canada to co-sponsor this important resolution. This resolution sends a clear message to the Iranian regime.

While the world is hopeful for improvement in human rights, the international community will not be fooled by Rouhani's charm offensive. Deeds matter far more than words.

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**CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA**

**Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Rob Ford scandal is not just troubling; it is driving up borrowing costs and damaging Toronto's economy.

Recently, Conservatives were saying he was "...a great mayor... doing a wonderful job". The Prime Minister himself recently appeared at a press conference with Mayor Ford. Yesterday, some

non-Toronto Conservatives, perhaps with their own ambitions in mind, started distancing themselves. The Minister of Employment and Social Development even demanded that the PM's fishing buddy resign.

Not only is his caucus divided on Rob Ford, but his explanations for the Senate scandal are quickly unravelling. The PM claimed his office was not being investigated, but today police accused his former top aide, Nigel Wright, of breaking the law. The PM claimed he found out in May about a "secret agreement", but today we find out his staff briefed him last February.

While Conservatives make up stories to explain their scandals and cover-ups, people know they can trust the NDP to defend taxpayers, and all Conservative—

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Etobicoke Centre.

\* \* \*

• (1420)

**MEMBER FOR SCARBOROUGH—AGINCOURT**

**Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government has improved financial benefits and programs for Canadian veterans right across the board. Since 2011, the minister, on the advice of veterans, stakeholders, and advisory groups, has implemented 160 recommendations, yet some in this place disagree with that practice and feel veterans cannot be trusted with their own finances.

They have commented, and I quote, "...that's like hanging a case of beer in front of a drunk....They...go and spend it, either trying to buy a house...a fast car or spending it on booze or addiction".

Do members know who said that? It was the Liberal Party of Canada, the same party that brought us the decade of darkness.

I call on the leader of the Liberal Party to fire his spokesman immediately for his disrespect and, quite frankly, ignorant and uninformed comments.

**ORAL QUESTIONS**

[*Translation*]

**ETHICS**

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, is there anything the Prime Minister wants to change about what he has said concerning the Senate expense scandal?

[*English*]

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have been very clear. As soon as I learned of this matter on May 15, we made that matter public. We have taken appropriate actions against Mr. Wright and Mr. Duffy who now, as the RCMP confirmed, are the individuals under investigation on this matter.

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, let me be perfectly clear. The Prime Minister just said that he did not know until May 15, but unfortunately for him, on May 14, Nigel Wright wrote that the Prime Minister in fact did know that he, Wright, had “personally assisted Duffy”. Is that true?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me be very clear. It is right in the documents about what Mr. Wright told the RCMP. He said he told me that Senator Duffy had agreed to repay the money. He told me that he did not inform me of his personal decision to pay that money himself. When I learned of that, I took the appropriate action.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister keeps trying to hold onto a detail. We are talking about the whole scheme that took place in his office.

On February 22, Nigel Wright wrote, “I do want to speak to the PM before everything is considered final...”. An hour later he wrote, “We are good to go from the PM...”. What did the Prime Minister approve during that hour?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this is answered right in the RCMP documents. They say that Nigel Wright said the Prime Minister was aware on February 22 that Senator Duffy had agreed to repay the money.

I later learned on May 15 that was not true, and let me tell members what the conclusion of the RCMP is on this. After months of interviews and review of documents, the investigator says he is not aware of any evidence that the Prime Minister was involved in the repayment or reimbursement of money to Senator Duffy or his lawyer. The RCMP could not be clearer on this.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, “We are good to go”. Good to go with what?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, good to go with Mr. Duffy repaying his own expenses, as he has acknowledged I told him to personally, as he told everybody he had done, including the Canadian public; and when we found that was not true, we took the appropriate action, and he has been appropriately sanctioned by the Senate.

• (1425)

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on May 28, when the Prime Minister was first questioned about the deal with Mike Duffy, he said that he never gave “any” instruction to his staff on how to handle the Duffy scandal, but we now know from court documents that Nigel Wright went to the Prime Minister for approval of the deal. Why did the Prime Minister say something to Parliament that he knew was not true?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I have made clear, I was told that Mr. Duffy was going to repay the money himself, something he announced on national television for everybody. That story proved not to be true. When I learned that it was not true from Mr. Wright, on May 15, we took the appropriate action, and that is why Mr. Wright and Mr. Duffy are now under investigation.

**Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve leaders who tell the truth.

The RCMP revealed this morning that the Prime Minister's Office was guilty of corruption and that the government had been covering it up for months.

Does the Prime Minister still believe that he bears no responsibility for the corruption in his own office?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, what the RCMP has confirmed in its documents today is that two individuals, Mr. Duffy and Mr. Wright, are under investigation for their actions in this matter and it has also confirmed that this Prime Minister has been telling exactly the truth.

[Translation]

**Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, for months, Canadians across the country have had doubts about what this government has been telling them.

Today, we learned that the Prime Minister did in fact mislead the House. Canadians expect better from their leaders.

Will the Prime Minister take responsibility and agree to testify under oath?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the RCMP confirmed two things today.

First, it confirmed that Mr. Wright and Mr. Duffy are under investigation in this matter. Second, it found that the Prime Minister told the whole truth in this matter.

[English]

**Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, when the member for Edmonton—St. Albert said that the Conservative caucus had become what it once mocked, non-answers like that were what he meant. Two weeks ago everyone in the Conservative caucus could have stood up for Canadians and, instead, chose to stand up to help their leader cover up this scandal.

When will the Prime Minister finally put his country ahead of his party and tell Canadians the truth?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it was only a few sitting days ago that the Senate was asked to pronounce judgment on senators who had behaved inappropriately. Conservative senators voted to sanction to those members. Liberal senators, of course, voted not to do that, voted to protect those senators, which is very consistent with the kind of Communist dictatorship that the member so admires.

[Translation]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Nigel Wright said that he went to see the Prime Minister to get his approval. It is written in black and white in the documents the RCMP filed in court.

Is the Prime Minister trying to tell us that Nigel Wright is a liar?

*Oral Questions*

• (1430)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is written in black and white that Mr. Wright said that Mr. Duffy was going to repay his own expenses. It was not until later that he decided not to. When I learned of that, I immediately took the appropriate action.

[English]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Actually, Mr. Speaker, in those documents what Nigel Wright does in fact say is that the Prime Minister knew that he had “personally assisted Mike Duffy with repaying his expenses”.

Did the Prime Minister ask Nigel Wright what personal assistance he had given to Mike Duffy, yes or no?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, the RCMP interviewed Mr. Wright on this question, and he was extremely clear. He said that he did not tell the Prime Minister of his eventual personal decision to pay the \$90,000 to Senator Duffy. It could not be clearer from Mr. Wright or from the RCMP. The hon. member should accept it.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister keeps trying to hang his hat on the detail of the form of that personal assistance. He keeps avoiding the clear question as to whether or not he knew that Nigel Wright had personally assisted Mike Duffy.

Could he tell Canadians what he knew?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is in black and white that I did not know. The RCMP confirms it. Unlike the Leader of the Opposition, it did not take it 17 years to figure that out.

[Translation]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, was the Prime Minister aware of the original plan to pay back Mike Duffy's expenses using Conservative Party money or not?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, from the beginning, my position has been that Mr. Duffy had to pay back his own expenses.

When I learned that that was not what he had done, I took the appropriate action.

[English]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and Senator Irving Gerstein have said that the Conservative Party never agreed to repay any of Mike Duffy's expenses.

However, on February 22, Nigel Wright wrote that he had “the go-ahead from Gerstein to tell Mike Duffy” that “there will be an arrangement to keep him whole on the repayment to cover it”.

Is the Prime Minister saying that Nigel Wright was lying about that too?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what I can say is that Mr. Wright repaid Mr. Duffy's expenses, although the two of them let it be known, to the contrary, that it was Mr. Duffy himself who had repaid his expenses.

That was obviously not the appropriate thing to do. That is why those two individuals have been sanctioned and are under further investigation.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Prime Minister acknowledged that his chief of staff, Nigel Wright, was under investigation.

The RCMP says that it believes the Prime Minister's chief of staff committed bribery, fraud, and breach of trust. Who else in his office knew? Who else was involved?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, if the Leader of the Opposition wants to cite the RCMP, he would note that it is these two individuals who are under investigation for what was an improper payment, I think something Mr. Wright himself admits.

That is the appropriate thing, that those who undertook these actions be held responsible and accountable.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, actually, the question was, “Who else was involved? Who else knew?”

June 5, the Prime Minister said in the House that it was no one but Nigel Wright; October 24, the Prime Minister said in the House that a few people knew; in these documents, 12 people are aware of it.

That is the real question. Who else was involved? Who else knew?

• (1435)

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the record is very clear. From all documents, the sole responsibility for these actions rests with Mr. Wright and with Mr. Duffy. That is why these two individuals are under investigation. Mr. Wright has accepted his responsibility and co-operated fully. That is not the case for Mr. Duffy.

We will ensure that we provide all co-operation and assistance to ensure that those who are responsible are held accountable.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on November 7 the Prime Minister claimed that his office was not under investigation. Yesterday the Prime Minister said that his office was not under investigation to the best of his knowledge.

In the 80 pages of court documents released today, the RCMP listed 12 top Conservative officials whose emails were being investigated. That list includes half a dozen staff from the Prime Minister's Office.

How many in the Prime Minister's Office have been under investigation? How many have to be under investigation before the Prime Minister admits that his office is indeed under criminal investigation?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, the documents make clear there are two individuals who are under investigation, Mr. Wright and Mr. Duffy, as has been said from the outset of this affair.



*Oral Questions*

Let me say specifically, what the RCMP says about the PMO. The RCMP investigator reports that he had “clear orders from the Prime Minister to provide complete cooperation with the investigation, and to provide any assistance or documentation the RCMP requested”. That is exactly what we have done.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, that is nice reading. It just has nothing to do with the question.

[Translation]

Senator Gerstein was asked to pay for Duffy's fraudulent expenses. He was then asked to talk to Deloitte to try to manipulate the audit process.

Who ordered him to do everything in his power to fudge the results of the audit?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the RCMP clearly said that Mr. Wright and Mr. Duffy are the ones under investigation here. We obviously expect the RCMP to continue its work and we will provide assistance to ensure that these individuals are held accountable.

[English]

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, according to RCMP affidavits, Senator Irving Gerstein, the Conservative Party money man, planned to use donors' money, illegally, to pay off Mike Duffy. He even picked up the phone to call Deloitte's to have it back off on audit, and he was not even a member of the audit committee.

Therefore, why is Senator Irving Gerstein a member of the Conservative caucus? In fact, why is he even a senator at all?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what is very clear from the documents that have been put into the courts is that this, again, is between Nigel Wright and Senator Duffy.

What is also very clear is that the Prime Minister, as stated by the RCMP, had given clear orders to provide complete co-operation and assistance with this investigation, in contrast to the Liberals, who always protect the status quo.

We always stand up for taxpayers and the Prime Minister is, again, showing the type of leadership that Canadians have come to depend on: open and honest government. That is what they can always rely upon from Conservatives.

[Translation]

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, under oath, a member of the RCMP told a judge that several crimes were committed in the office of the Prime Minister of Canada.

The RCMP also confirmed that Nigel Wright engaged in corruption in his official capacity as chief of staff and that Mr. Wright waited for the Prime Minister's approval before carrying out his plan.

Is the Prime Minister waiting for the RCMP to break down the front door of 24 Sussex before he tells Canadians the truth?

[English]

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what the RCMP has said confirms that the Prime Minister did not know about this. That is something the Prime Minister has been saying for months. Those members refuse to listen. Had the Prime Minister known, he would have in no way endorsed such a scheme. The RCMP says that it has absolutely no evidence that shows the Prime Minister knew.

Also, the Prime Minister has been saying, right from the beginning, that we would co-operate and assist the investigation in any way possible. Those were the orders given by the Prime Minister to his office, and the RCMP has confirmed that is what has happened.

An open, accountable, transparent government is what Canadians want. That is what they get from the Prime Minister day in and day out.

• (1440)

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians realize the seriousness of this situation. An RCMP officer swore an affidavit before a judge stating that three crimes took place in the Prime Minister's Office. The RCMP swears that Nigel Wright acted corruptly in his official duties as the Prime Minister's chief of staff, but only after explicitly getting the Prime Minister's go-ahead.

Therefore, what is the Prime Minister waiting for? For the RCMP to kick down the door at 24 Sussex Drive before telling Canadians the truth?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what the RCMP said was that the Prime Minister immediately ordered his PMO to co-operate and to assist with the investigation, and that is what it did. What it also said was that the Prime Minister did not know anything about this. What the Prime Minister has said is that had he known, he would have in no way endorsed this.

The Liberals know nothing about accountability. They have a leader who praises dictatorships. His main priority is the legalization of marijuana.

As for the member for Medicine Hat's outstanding question—

**Mr. LaVar Payne:** Where's the \$40 million?

**Mr. Paul Calandra:** Where is the 40 million bucks?

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

**The Speaker:** Order, please. I think just one member at a time needs to answer questions.

The hon. member for Halifax.

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, can the Prime Minister explain how it was possible for him to claim last May that he had no knowledge of the legal agreement with Mike Duffy, when PMO emails released by the police show that Nigel Wright got authorization for the deal in February?

*Oral Questions*

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said in this House on a number of occasions, Senator Duffy approached the Prime Minister, and the Prime Minister said to him, “Repay any expenses that you did not incur.” It has been quite obvious. Since February, he was told that. He then went on TV and told people he had paid and had taken a mortgage out on his home. That was wrong.

The RCMP confirmed that this Prime Minister did not know about the arrangement. Had the Prime Minister known, he would have in no way endorsed such a scheme. Nigel Wright has to accept the consequences of what he has done. Senator Duffy should accept the consequences of what he has done, and the NDP and Liberals should stop defending the status quo.

**Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, that was not an answer to the question, so let us try again.

Documents from February 22 of this year say, “We are good to go from the PM once Ben has his confirmation from Payne”. This was about the Prime Minister’s lawyer negotiating with Mike Duffy’s lawyer.

What did the Prime Minister say to Nigel Wright on February 22 that gave him the go-ahead?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what he said, not only to Senator Duffy but to all of caucus, was, “Repay the expenses that you did not incur”. It is a very simple instruction. If they have an expense they did not incur, they had better repay it, or they are not going to get the support of this caucus. We did not tell Senator Duffy to go on TV and lie to people about how he had repaid those expenses. He made that decision on his own. Nigel Wright made the decision on his own. These two people are under investigation.

What is very clear is this: Had this Prime Minister known, he would have in no way endorsed such an action. The RCMP confirmed that, and the RCMP confirmed that this Prime Minister is assisting in every way possible.

[Translation]

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on February 22, Nigel Wright sent an email to Benjamin Perrin and other individuals at the Prime Minister’s Office. In this email regarding the agreement to repay Duffy’s illegal claims, Nigel Wright wrote, “I now have the go-ahead on point 3, with a couple stipulations”.

Who gave approval to Nigel Wright? Was it the Prime Minister?  
[English]

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I just stated, the Prime Minister not only told Senator Duffy but all of caucus, including MPs and senators, that if they had any inappropriate expenses, they had to repay those expenses. It has been very clear for months that this is the standard this Prime Minister has expected. What is also very clear is that the Prime Minister did not know. That is in these documents. What is also very clear is that the

Prime Minister ordered his office to co-operate and to assist in any way possible. That is real leadership.

Members can contrast that to the leader of the NDP, who waited 17 years and could not figure out if he got a bribe, yes or no.

[Translation]

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, that is interesting, but it does not answer the question.

Wright had approval with a couple stipulations. I would like to quote what Nigel Wright said about one of these stipulations:

I would like to understand who if anyone Sen. Duffy ever intends to inform about point 3.... I assume that I know the answer, but I would like it to be explicit. For its part, the Party would not inform anyone.

Was the Prime Minister aware of the third point of this repayment agreement?

• (1445)

[English]

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again, on February 13, Senator Duffy approached the Prime Minister, and he told Senator Duffy to repay any inappropriate expenses. That is what he was told. Senator Duffy then went on TV and told a different story. We know that was not true. We also know that the Prime Minister did not know. It was confirmed by RCMP documents that he did not know. Had he known, he would have in no way endorsed such a scheme.

What is also very important is the leadership this Prime Minister has shown in helping and assisting in the investigation and in making sure that the RCMP have access to whatever they need on this investigation. That is real leadership, in contrast to the Leader of the Opposition, who waited 17 years.

\* \* \*

#### JUSTICE

**Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, online intimidation has been a factor in the tragic suicides of several Canadian teenagers. Our hearts and prayers go out to the families of Amanda Todd, Rehtaeh Parsons, Todd Loik, and all of those who have been tragically affected by cyberbullying.

Our government has been clear that there is a point where bullying goes beyond just bullying and becomes criminal behaviour. One of the most egregious forms of cyberbullying is the posting of intimate images of people against their will. Can the Prime Minister please update this House on the action our government will take to protect Canadians from online crime?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question and her interest in this issue.

[Translation]

Too many young lives have been lost in Canada as a result of bullying, and more recently as a result of cyberbullying.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

I have met with victims of these families, and we have pledged to take action. Today our government will be tabling legislation on these specific matters.

Let me just say, I think we all understand here that nothing we do can bring back the precious lives that have been lost, but hopefully the actions we are taking today will do some things to change things in the future and will also provide these families with some sense that their concerns are taken seriously and some sense of justice for their daughters.

\* \* \*

*[Translation]***ETHICS**

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Senator Gerstein was asked to pay Mr. Duffy's fraudulent expenses. Then he was asked to talk to Deloitte to meddle with the audit report that the firm was preparing. We want to know who ordered him to do everything in his power to manipulate Deloitte's findings. Who was it?

*[English]*

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said on a number of occasions, had the Prime Minister known anything about this, he would have in no way endorsed this scheme. The RCMP confirmed that the Prime Minister did not know. The RCMP have also stated that the Prime Minister has ordered his office to be co-operative and to assist in any way possible.

When we talk about honesty in government, this is a member who ran as a federalist but continues to support separatist causes in this country. When we talk about being open and honest, he should maybe be open and honest with constituents. Is he a federalist, or is he separatist? That would be a good starting point.

*[Translation]*

**Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today we learned about the Prime Minister's peculiar math. All of a sudden, one person can turn into a few people, even 12 people. That is a rather interesting calculation.

Irving Gerstein clearly tried to manipulate the results of an audit of Conservative senators' expenses. Mr. Gerstein is the director of fundraising for the Conservative Party.

Why is this fraudster, this manipulator, still on the public payroll?

*[English]*

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there is one thing I know. Only this member can tell us who the fundraising chair for Québec solidaire is, because he has made 29 separate donations to them.

What this is about is Senator Duffy incurring expenses that he was not entitled to. He needed to pay those back. At the same time, he went on TV and told Canadians that he did that. That was wrong. We know that Nigel Wright did that. That was also wrong. Nigel Wright has accepted sole and full responsibility.

The additional information we have today confirms that the Prime Minister's Office has been open and honest and has provided any assistance needed and that the Prime Minister did not know, and had he, he would have never approved such—

● (1450)

**The Speaker:** The hon. member for Timmins—James Bay.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, documents released by the RCMP today show us that Senator Gerstein was brought in for discussions with Deloitte about paying back Mike Duffy's expenses. I guess the cover-up theory was that they would pay back the expenses, and they would make the audit go away.

When the Prime Minister was briefed about this deal on February 22, was he informed that Senator Gerstein had been brought in for the discussions with Deloitte about Mike Duffy's audit?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I have already said, on February 13, the Prime Minister told not only MPs but senators, "If you have expenses that you did not incur, you should repay those expenses". He said that on a number of occasions in the House. I have said that on a number of occasions. That is the standard that we expect on this side of the House. I think that is the standard all Canadians expect.

We also learned on May 15 that the story Senator Duffy had told about repaying those expenses on his own was not true. That is why, of course, the Prime Minister has stated that had he known, he would have in no way endorsed such a scheme. Also, he has shown leadership in making sure that his office provides any assistance necessary on this matter.

**Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I noticed in his little run through the calendar, he jumped over the date of February 22, when he was briefed on this.

What we also learned from the RCMP file is that Privy Council employee Chris Montgomery objected to this scheme, and he warned that the senators were actually compromising themselves. However, the scheme went on, and Mr. Montgomery was soon gone. Who moved Chris Montgomery out of the way and instructed Senator Gerstein and Senator Tkachuk to whitewash an audit into the potential misspending by Mike Duffy?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, what is clear in the documents we received today is that the Prime Minister ordered his office to co-operate and to assist in any way possible.

However, having this member talk about ethics is very strange. Let me quote something: "This was the first hint of what the Commission considers to be inappropriate involvement by a Member of Parliament in the electoral distribution process".

Who is that talking about? It is the member for Timmins—James Bay. Maybe in a supplementary question we will talk about the other member of the NDP who also was implicated in trying to gerrymander their ridings. Then maybe we could talk about the 17 years it took the Leader of the Opposition to disclose the bribe he—

*Oral Questions*

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

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the RCMP believe there was a broad-based conspiracy within and beyond the Prime Minister's Office to cover up Mike Duffy's situation. The police believe that conspiracy involved the commission of criminal offences. The players were all the Prime Minister's senior entourage: Wright and Duffy, Perrin and Woodcock, Rogers, Novak, van Hemmen, Hamilton and Byrne, Gerstein, LeBreton, Tkachuk, Stewart-Olsen. Now we know the PCO was involved too. Despite their denials, a paper trail is on their computers.

Who told the Privy Council Office to lie to this House?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, obviously, he did not read any part of the report, because this is what it says: "...the PMO, advised my office that he had clear orders from the Prime Minister to provide complete cooperation with the investigation, and to provide any assistance or documentation the RCMP requested".

That is what is actually in the report. It also goes on to say, "I am not aware of any evidence that the Prime Minister was involved in the repayment or reimbursement of money to Senator Duffy or his lawyer."

He can get up in this House and make all kinds of accusations, but the facts are what the facts are. When it comes to showing leadership, it is this Prime Minister who shows it every day.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister told us that after he ordered Duffy, on February 13, to repay his expenses, he, the Prime Minister, heard nothing further until May 15, but from the RCMP documents today, that cannot be true. There was at least one later briefing by Wright, and maybe others. At least in broad terms, the Prime Minister knew Wright had some personal role. This was the Prime Minister's Office: his staff, his lawyers, his most trusted inner circle.

Would any CEO in the private sector keep his job if so much got screwed up on his watch?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the last time I checked, this is a member who was a minister in a government that took \$40 million. I do not remember him losing his job. Members can contrast that to the leadership of this Prime Minister, who, when he found out on May 15, ordered the Prime Minister's Office to co-operate and assist the RCMP in this investigation.

That is real leadership. That is the type of leadership they get from this Prime Minister day in and day out. That is why Canadians keep rewarding this side of the House with electoral victories, because they know they can trust us to put their needs first.

\* \* \*

● (1455)

**HOUSING**

**Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today a rally for affordable housing was held on Parliament Hill, and no Conservative even bothered to show up.

While the Liberals were in power they eliminated funding for affordable housing, until NDP leader Jack Layton forced them to start investing again. Now the Conservatives are threatening to end affordable housing agreements, putting 200,000 more families at risk. When will the Conservatives do the right thing, restore long-term funding, and commit to addressing this housing crisis?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in point in fact, all the NDP does on housing is attend protests. This government actually provides housing to people who need it.

Every year, we provide support for nearly 600,000 individuals and families with subsidized housing. CMHC provided mortgage subsidies for long-term 25- to 50-year agreements. With housing first, what we are actually doing, instead of funding advocacy and political work, is actually giving people the shelter they need with action, not just talk.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, that does not seem to be sufficient.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce, Food Banks Canada and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities all agree that the federal government needs to address the housing crisis.

In Montreal, the cost of housing has increased by 40% in 10 years. This is unsustainable for Canadian families.

Will the minister commit to provide long-term funding to solve the housing crisis?

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, all the NDP members ever do about housing is attend protests.

The government is working to provide housing for Canadians in need. That is why, every year, we provide support for almost 600,000 Canadians and their families through subsidized housing. With our new housing first program, we are ensuring that resources are reserved for families who need housing, not funding political work.

*Oral Questions*

[English]

**PUBLIC SAFETY**

**Hon. Rob Merrifield (Yellowhead, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Speech from the Throne made it very clear that our government will remain committed to protecting public safety and that we will take targeted action to increase the safety of the transportation of dangerous goods. This has become an increasing concern, particularly in my riding because of recent derailments.

Can the Minister of Transport tell the House what additional measures our government is taking to further enhance the safety of the transportation of dangerous goods?

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge and thank the hon. member for his direct work in the derailment that did happen in Gainford, Alberta. He was there for his constituents and he served the public very well in that matter.

I am very pleased today to speak of the fact that we have issued a protective directive in order to ensure that Canadian municipalities have the information they need in order to provide appropriate emergency planning, training, and information to first responders in communities where the transportation of dangerous goods happens.

I think it is an excellent communication between the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, the railway companies, and of course, ourselves. We should be very proud moving forward.

\* \* \*

**TRANSPORTATION**

**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government is aware that the contract for the Wood Islands-Caribou ferry service expires at the end of March.

I hope the government is aware of how critical this transportation link is. It is so important to the economy of Prince Edward Island and Pictou County in Nova Scotia.

Can the minister indicate to the House when a new contract will be signed? Will the contract maintain the service at its present level. Will the contract be for five years or more?

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, of course the government is aware of its importance, and that is exactly why the Minister of Fisheries announced in June of last year our commitment of \$13 million for this ferry to ensure that it continued to serve the needs of the community in Prince Edward Island.

We are very proud of the work we do with our eastern ferries to ensure that we have good service and good transportation links across this country, and we will continue to work with the communities.

\* \* \*

● (1500)

**ETHICS**

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, who ordered the whitewashing of the Deloitte audit into Senate expenses?

**Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I know this is troubling for the leader of the NDP because of the contrast to his waiting 17 years to talk about the fact that he was offered a bribe. He sees the trouble now that Quebec is going through because of his delay in speaking about that.

When he contrasts himself to the Prime Minister who, as soon as he found out, took immediate action, opened up his office and ordered them to co-operate and assist the RCMP, I know he must be embarrassed because there is no way he can compare to the Prime Minister when it comes to open, accountable, reliable government. The Prime Minister shows that leadership every single day.

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**IMMIGRATION**

**Mr. Ed Holder (London West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the member of Parliament for London West, I was terribly saddened to hear of the tragic events surrounding the Walji family. It was a shock to our whole community.

Some media reports and even opposition politicians have implied that the immigration system has somehow failed the Walji family.

Would the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration please advise the House on what measures were taken to help the Walji family?

**Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Government of Canada, and I hope on behalf of all members of this place, I would like to extend condolences to the Walji family's friends and loved ones.

Although this matter is still under investigation, let me assure the House that this family was offered several opportunities to become permanent residents. They were offered a pathway to permanent residence and that path was not taken.

On this side of the House, we are engaged in mourning the tragic loss of this family and we will not engage, like some in the opposition, in politicizing cases of this sort, as the member for London—Fanshawe has done, for example.

We encourage everyone to join us in mourning this tragic loss of life.

\* \* \*

**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, on October 31, a tailings pond dike at the former Obed Mountain coal mine near Hinton, Alberta, failed, releasing one billion litres of toxic coal slurry into the Athabasca River. The resulting toxic plume is travelling north and is expected to cross into the Northwest Territories within two weeks.

As protection of transboundary and northern waterways is a federal jurisdiction, what is Environment Canada doing to protect northern Canadians from this toxic spill?

*Routine Proceedings*

**Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Environment Canada is supporting the province and providing assistance as required. Environment Canada's enforcement officers are looking into the situation, and our government will continue to take action against those who break our environmental laws.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**SECURITIES**

**Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, the chief executives of leading Quebec companies—such as COGECO, Québecor, Couche-Tard, Metro and Jean Coutu—are again condemning the federal government, which wants to establish a national securities commission.

These entrepreneurs say that this move will result in the loss of influence and expertise, distance capital from Quebec companies, kill jobs and weaken Montreal's economy. The worst thing is that the federal government is attacking a system that works very well.

Why is the federal government so bent on stripping Montreal of its financial expertise and hindering the development of Quebec companies?

[English]

**Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canada is the only developed country in the world without a single securities regulator. That is why we have been working with the provinces and the territories to establish a single securities regulator for some time.

We are pleased to have recently announced the establishment of a co-operative regulator with Ontario and British Columbia. This regulator will promote jobs and growth by better protecting investors, enhancing Canada's financial services sector, supporting efficient capital markets, and managing systemic risk. I strongly encourage all provinces and territories to join in this participation as well.

\* \* \*

**POINTS OF ORDER**

## AFGHAN VETERANS MONUMENT

**Mr. Parm Gill (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, regarding the comments I made during the debate last night in the House, I would like to correct the record.

Canadian veterans can be confident that their military service record and any active Veterans Affairs files are available to veterans.

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

● (1505)

[English]

**PROTECTING CANADIANS FROM ONLINE CRIME ACT**

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-13, an act to amend the Criminal Code, the Canada Evidence Act, the Competition Act, and the Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters Act.

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

\* \* \*

**INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS**

**Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the reports of the Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association respecting its participation at the visit of the defence and security committee, Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association, Washington, D.C., and Dayton, Ohio, U.S.A., February 1 to 5, 2012; the meeting of the standing committee, Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association, in Ljubljana, Slovenia, March 31, 2012; the joint visit of the 79th Rose-Roth seminar and the Mediterranean and Middle East special group, Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association, Marseille, France, May 11 to 13, 2012; the joint meeting of the defence and security committee, economics and security committee, and the joint political committee and the economics and security committee, Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association, Brussels, Belgium, and Paris, France, February 24 to 28, 2013; the subcommittee on east-west economic co-operation and convergence, Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association, Marrakesh, Morocco, April 3 to 5, 2013; the meeting of the standing committee and the secretaries of delegation, Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association, Copenhagen, Denmark, March 22 to 24, 2013; and finally, the 2013 spring session, Canadian NATO Parliamentary Association, Luxembourg, May 17 to 20, 2013.

**Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the following reports of the Canadian delegation of the Canada-United States Inter-Parliamentary Group respecting its participation in a number of events: first, the 2013 annual meeting of the Western Governors' Association that was held in Park City, Utah, United States of America, from June 28 to 30, 2013; the 68th annual meeting of the Council of States Governments, Midwestern Legislative Conference, held in St. Paul, Minnesota, United States of America, from July 14 to 17, 2013; the 2013 annual meeting of the National Governors Association that was held in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, from August 1 to 4, 2013; and last, the annual legislative summit of the National Conference of State Legislatures that was held in Atlanta, Georgia, from August 12 to 15, 2013.

## COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

### TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

**Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the first report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities in relation to supplementary estimates B, 2013-14.

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### PETITIONS

#### IMPAIRED DRIVING

**Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition from Kim Thomas of Cochrane, Alberta, in my riding, whose 17-year-old son Brandon was tragically killed by a drunk driver.

The petitioner, in honour of her son's memory, has taken it upon herself to collect over 1,000 signatures of individuals looking for tougher impaired driving laws in this country and calling upon the government to seek tougher laws and the implementation of new mandatory minimum sentencing for those persons convicted of impaired driving causing death. The petitioners are also asking for the Criminal Code of Canada to be changed to redefine the offence of impaired driving causing death to vehicular manslaughter.

• (1510)

#### ANIMAL WELFARE

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present a petition on behalf of thousands of Canadians who are concerned about cruelty to animals. They note that animals are capable of feeling pain and that those who abuse animals should face conviction and significant penalties.

The petitioners call upon the government to stop being soft on crime against animals, to amend the Criminal Code to recognize animals as beings that can feel pain, and to close the loopholes that allow abusers to escape penalties.

#### MOTOR VEHICLE SAFETY

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have another petition. It calls upon the government to mandate side guards on all trucks in order to save pedestrians' and cyclists' lives, as well as to save fuel. The petitioners note that another cyclist died under the back wheels of a truck without side guards. This accident occurred in my riding of Trinity—Spadina.

#### PENSIONS

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have a third petition. It calls on the government to keep the eligibility for old age security at 65 years, not 67 years, and to enhance the pension system through the guaranteed income supplement program so that all seniors can be lifted out of poverty.

#### CANADA POST

**Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the last petition I would like to present on behalf of my constituents calls on the federal government to instruct Canada Post to halt its plan to downsize and downgrade public post offices and to consult with the public and others to improve the Canadian Postal Service Charter by developing a better process for making changes.

### Routine Proceedings

**The Speaker:** I see several members rising to present petitions, so perhaps we can keep our summaries as brief as possible. I will just remind members that it is our tradition not to actually read the petition, but to summarize it.

#### GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS

**Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table two petitions from constituents in my riding of Guelph who are concerned about the negative impact of genetically modified organisms on all aspects of the Canadian agricultural sector. Their concerns range from possible irreversible genetic contamination to the rights of individual farmers to be able to save their own seed and the long-term health implications of GMOs.

The petitioners request an immediate moratorium on the licensing and release of new GMOs. They also request an independent review of existing GMOs that have already been released on the market.

#### SAMBRO ISLAND LIGHTHOUSE

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition signed by over 2,000 citizens from across Nova Scotia asking that the federal government continue funding the Sambro Island lighthouse.

This lighthouse is the oldest in the Americas. It was built in the late 1700s. It continues to stand as a gateway to Halifax Harbour and to Sambro. This is a historic lighthouse. It is of national historic importance, and the Government of Canada needs to continue to fund it.

#### THE ENVIRONMENT

**Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the government is expecting the people of Toronto to say “yes” to the line 9 pipeline, notwithstanding difficulties with the company in terms of its environmental record, notwithstanding the difficulty that people have had in intervening in the process, and notwithstanding the fact that the government has stripped environmental protection for new pipeline development.

The people who signed this petition cannot say “yes” to that.

[*Translation*]

#### THE BUDGET

**Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present several petitions signed by hundreds of Quebeckers.

The petitioners want the Minister of Finance in particular to do whatever is necessary to reverse the government's decision to eliminate the 15% federal tax credit granted to investors who pay into labour-sponsored funds, as announced in the budget on March 21, 2013.

*Routine Proceedings*

[English]

## TORONTO ISLAND AIRPORT

**Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present two petitions today signed by citizens in and around my riding of Beaches—East York in Toronto. Both petitions have to do with the Toronto Island airport.

The first petition calls on the government of Canada to block any changes to the tripartite agreement that would allow jet airplanes or extensions of the Toronto Island airport runways, to stop subsidizing Porter Airlines, and to compel the Toronto Port Authority to pay millions of dollars in back taxes owed to the people of Toronto.

● (1515)

**Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls upon the Government of Canada to amend the good neighbour policy to extend an eight-mile radius, to set out an altitude of not less than 2,500 feet, and to make this new policy mandatory, with emergency exceptions only.

[Translation]

## LABOUR-SPONSORED FUNDS

**Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present a petition on behalf of Canadians who are worried about the government's decision to eliminate the 15% federal tax credit granted to investors who pay into labour-sponsored funds. They are calling on the Minister of Finance to reverse that decision, and they are quite right to do so.

[English]

## SEARCH AND RESCUE

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two petitions from thousands of Canadians right across the country who state that they are opposed to the Government of Canada's decision to close the Canadian Coast Guard marine communications and traffic services centres in St. John's, Newfoundland; St. Anthony, Newfoundland; Saint John, New Brunswick; Rivière-au-Renard, Quebec; Montreal, Quebec; Thunder Bay, Ontario; Vancouver, B.C.; Tofino, B.C.; Comox, B.C.; and Inuvik, Northwest Territories.

As well, the petitioners oppose the closure of the Coast Guard marine rescue centres in Quebec City, St. John's, and Kitsilano.

The petitioners urge the government to acknowledge that the cuts to staff and the closure of the centres threaten the lives of fishers and other mariners and put the marine environment at risk. They call for the reversal of these decisions.

## SHARK FINNING

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in my next petition, the petitioners are calling on the government to take measures to stop the global practice of shark finning and to ensure responsible conservation and management of sharks.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to immediately legislate a ban on the importation of shark fins.

## RAIL TRANSPORTATION

**Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present this petition on behalf of residents in the Sarnia—Lambton area who are concerned about cuts to the rail passenger service.

It is important for young students, seniors, and families, and it is particularly important for smaller communities and their economies.

The petitioners are calling on the government and VIA Rail to reverse the cuts that have been made across Canada and to re-establish this rail service for passengers.

[Translation]

## MINING COMPANIES

**Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, I wish to present a petition signed by many people from Ahuntsic who want mining companies operating abroad to be regulated.

## AIR TRANSPORTATION

**Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, the other petition I wish to present is from another group of citizens.

It has to do with ADM and the noise caused by aircraft flying over Ahuntsic. The petitioners are calling on us to take an interest in this matter. They would like two positions to be created on ADM's board of directors to be filled by representatives of the people, as well as two other positions on the Soundscape Consultative Committee. The petitioners are calling for some interesting changes regarding management of the noise caused by aircraft flying overhead.

[English]

## HYDRAULIC FRACKING

**Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition on behalf of several residents of Prince Edward Island, including some from the great riding of Charlottetown.

The petitioners are concerned about the practice known as high-volume hydraulic fracking. This practice is of particular concern to us in Prince Edward Island because 100% of our drinking water comes from groundwater.

The petitioners point out that there is no definitive impartial report that can be used to either support or denounce fracking, so they are asking the government to have the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development study high-volume hydraulic fracking, and in particular its potential impacts on drinking water resources, air quality, human health, and the health of aquatic and terrestrial eco-systems, as well as the potential for seismic risks.



*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS**

## NAVIGABLE WATERS PROTECTION ACT

**Mr. Dennis Bevington (Western Arctic, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I stand to present a petition from the residents of Fort Smith, Yellowknife, and other locations in the Northwest Territories. They call on Parliament to quickly pass Bill C-529, an act to amend the Navigable Waters Protection Act in relation to Slave River. It is a bill that would protect the Slave River under the Navigable Water Protection Act, a river that has been used for navigation for hundreds of years.

Without this protection, the Slave River could be dammed or otherwise blocked without requiring any federal government intervention.

## CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION

**Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, Ind.):** Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition today on behalf of many Canadians who are calling on our federal government to maintain stable and predictable long-term core funding for public broadcasting, including CBC radio and Radio-Canada.

The petitioners feel the CBC plays an important role in reflecting Canadian culture nationally while at the same time serving many regional areas, including rural areas like northwestern Ontario.

• (1520)

## VISITOR VISAS

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by constituents with regard to the issue of visitor visas. The petitioners want to see extra consideration given to family members when visitor visas are being issued. Far too often, visas are turned down for family members who want to attend such things as weddings, birthdays, funerals, and many of the types of family moments when it is important for families to be together.

The petitioners are asking that more attention be given to the need for making changes to allow more visas to be issued to family members.

\* \* \*

**QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER**

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

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

\* \* \*

**MOTIONS FOR PAPERS**

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

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

[English]

**PRIORITY HIRING FOR INJURED VETERANS ACT**

**Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC)** moved that Bill C-11, An Act to amend the Public Service Employment Act (priority hiring for injured veterans), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is indeed an honour to rise before the House today to speak to this important issue and changes that will further enhance the way our government supports Canada's veterans and their families. It is also a pleasure to do so soon after our nation came together as one to express its great pride and profound gratitude for what these men and women and their families did for our country.

The outpouring of respect and admiration we saw from coast to coast to coast on Remembrance Day and throughout Veterans' Week was truly heartwarming and reassuring to me as Canada's Minister of Veterans Affairs. I have always believed that this support and recognition for veterans and still-serving members must extend year round, and the changes we are discussing today are another example of how our government is doing exactly that.

Before I turn to the specifics of the amendments before us, I would like to take a moment to talk about the reasons why we are proceeding with these changes and how they fit within our ongoing effort to help veterans and releasing members of the Canadian Armed Forces to make seamless transitions into civilian life.

As Minister of Veterans Affairs and previously as the associate minister of national defence, I have had the privilege to see personally and up close why the men and women who have worn our nation's uniform and those who continue to wear it reflect the very best of who we are as Canadians. I have been impressed by their skill and professionalism, their character and courage and their commitment to serve without hesitation or reservation. I have listened with pride and awe to their stories and experiences. I have been amazed by their modesty and have appreciated their frank discussions about the issues that matter most to them and their families.

One concern I have heard many times is the challenge some of them have faced, or are facing, as they make the transition to civilian life. Central to this are the difficulties some experience trying to start rewarding new careers.

We know that former personnel sometimes face barriers trying to demonstrate how their military training, skills and experience translate into the civilian workforce. Our government understands this and that is why we have been doing everything we can to promote veterans' skill sets to potential employers. That is why we were a founding partner and financial supporter of the Helmets to Hardhats Canada program that provides veterans with opportunities for employment and apprenticeship in the construction industry and why we launched our hire a veteran initiative in partnership with employers across the country to assist veterans in finding new and meaningful work.

*Government Orders*

My department has been doing its part by specifically targeting veterans for hire by treating military experience as an asset in our selection process. Now our government is proud to take these efforts an important step further. Through our proposed amendments to the Public Service Employment Act and through changes to its regulations, we are moving veterans to the front of the line when it comes to hiring qualified Canadians for federal public service jobs.

With the proposed amendments before us, we will create a five-year statutory priority entitlement for Canadian veterans who are medically released for service-related reasons. This change will give veterans the highest level of consideration for jobs above all other groups in recognition of their sacrifice to Canada. With this change, we are recognizing that while these men and women have suffered injuries that prevent them from continuing to serve in the Canadian Armed Forces, they still have so much to contribute to our country. This is the right and honourable thing to do.

Also, through changes to the act and accompanying regulations, full-time, regular and reserve force veterans who are medically released for non-service related reasons will see their existing level of priority extended from two to five years. This will also allow them a longer period of priority entitlement for positions they are qualified to fill. Simply put, these changes will offer qualified veterans the employment and career opportunities that never existed before for those injured and while they were serving as members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

● (1525)

What is more, we will extend these opportunities to Canada's cadet organization administration and training services and to Rangers by adding them to the definition of who is considered "personnel" with the Canadian Armed Forces.

Finally, the proposed amendments we make to this legislation will be retroactive to April 1, 2012. This means that if a veteran previously had priority status under the regulations and that status expired during the past 18 to 19 months, we will reinstate it with a full five years. It is the same for those veterans who still have priority entitlement. We will extend that out to a full five years as well.

We are doing all of these things because we believe veterans deserve such considerations and because Canada will also be better for it.

For those of us who are fortunate enough to work with veterans on a daily basis, we understand that without these changes, we run the risk of continuing to lose the valuable contributions of highly-qualified individuals when they honourably end their military careers because of an injury or an illness. That is why we believe these amendments are common sense and that is why it is incumbent upon us to work in close consultation with key partners such as the Public Service Commission, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat and the Department of National Defence, so Canada can continue to reap dividends from having invested in and supported veterans' military careers, ensure our nation's workforce is bolstered and enriched by the contributions veterans have to offer and, most certainly, at the same time continue to provide injured and ill veterans with the chance to keep serving their country and develop their experience and skills in a civilian capacity.

The measures I have outlined today are yet another way we can continue to honour veterans in a meaningful and practical way and ensure they share in the wealth and security that they helped create.

To summarize, every year, many military members transition out of the Canadian Armed Forces. For those Canadian Armed Forces members who cannot deploy and meet the demands of operations, finding meaningful employment is a key factor in making a successful transition to civilian life.

When a position becomes open in the public service, different groups have different levels of access. In spring 2014, when this regulation is expected to come into force, those regular force and reserve force members who are medically released from the Canadian Armed Forces for service-related reasons will receive a statutory priority for a period of five years. This will provide veterans with the highest level of priority consideration for public service positions above all other groups in recognition of their sacrifices and service to Canada. This recognition will also apply to their families.

It will move veterans who are injured in the service of Canada to the front of the line. Those full-time, regular or reserve force veterans who are released for non-service related medical reasons will continue to receive their existing level of priority. However, the duration of their access will be increased from two years to five years, allowing them a longer period of priority entitlement for positions. Veterans who make use of this measure must qualify for the postings they are seeking. The changes will apply to medically released veterans who received a priority entitlement on or after April 1, 2012.

When I announced this legislation in Toronto, Shaun Francis, the chair of True Patriot Love Foundation, said:

The leadership skills, experience and expertise that our personnel develop in uniform is second to none, and makes them an invaluable asset to any new organization they choose to join...We are proud of our ongoing partnership with the Government of Canada to ensure that soldiers, sailors and air personnel can continue to build on the incredible commitment they have already shown to Canada.

● (1530)

In addition to the proposed legislative and regulatory changes, our government continues to work with corporate Canada to help veterans find new opportunities to successfully make the transition from military to civilian life. Partnering with corporate Canada allows veterans to put their training and skills acquired during their service to good use in the civilian workforce, while at the same time also providing a quality of life for themselves and their families. We also provide opportunities to train and upscale their abilities to better qualify for available jobs in the federal public service and elsewhere. We recently announced in excess of \$75,000 for such training and upscaling.

I would like to close by calling upon all members of this honourable House to lend their full support to these important changes and ensure that our men and women, who have given so much to our country and who are now becoming our veterans, receive their full entitlement and our respectful support for this proposal.

*Government Orders*

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister for introducing this bill to help military personnel make the transition to civilian life.

I would like to ask the minister two questions. One of them concerns his bill and the other touches on a related matter. The minister mentioned in his speech that he is proud to be able to help veterans in their transition to civilian life through the Helmets to Hardhats program, which helps veterans find jobs in the construction industry. However, this program is not available in Quebec. Quebec veterans are at a disadvantage compared to veterans in the rest of Canada who have access to this program.

Therefore, I would like to ask the minister if he is working on other partnerships with the private sector, as requested by the ombudsman in one of his recent reports, such as partnerships with the aerospace industry or defence industry.

Furthermore, the bill seems to have forgotten about a category of people. For example, a soldier with a non-service-related injury could ask the Veterans Review and Appeal Board (VRAB) to overturn this decision. After two or three years, VRAB could recognize this.

Is the minister prepared to amend the bill to extend the deadline for someone whose appeal to the board to overturn the department's decision is successful?

• (1535)

[*English*]

**Hon. Julian Fantino:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his concern for the well-being and welfare of our veterans and their families. I encourage him to lend support to this initiative as it will help along the way to achieve the best possible results in helping our veterans transition.

With regard to the Helmets to Hardhats program, I do not know that there is any limitation as to who can avail themselves of the program. We are partnering with the construction unions and the industry. I will look into the issue the member raised with respect to Quebec. I believe it is available nationwide, but I will make a specific inquiry and get back to the member with respect to that.

With regard to the private sector, obviously this is an initiative that focuses on jobs in the federal public service. We also have other programs that we recently announced. There are \$75,000-plus for upgrading skills and training for a veteran who may choose to embark on a career elsewhere. This is also available to a spouse or a related family member.

There is great buy-in on the part of corporate Canada to join with us in securing good jobs for our veterans and welcoming them into the workforce.

**Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I was somewhat amused to hear the hon. minister describe the Government of Canada as a financial partner in the Helmets to Hardhats program. Last year during the NHL playoffs, the Government of Canada was spending about \$90,000 per ad on self-serving economic action plan ads. Its annual investment in the Helmets to Hardhats program is a little bit more than \$100,000 for a website.

Would the minister please explain why economic action plan ads are a more important investment than the Helmets to Hardhats program?

**Hon. Julian Fantino:** Mr. Speaker, I would also like to thank the hon. member for his expressed concern, but I wonder if he would also consider speaking to some of his folks with regard to helping us promote the good programs. His colleagues can obviously chime in, and every little bit helps. Helmets to Hardhats is a program that is in partnership with the corporate private sector.

This is another initiative, and if the hon. member has other ideas or suggestions, as Minister of Veterans Affairs I would welcome his input. However, let me also indicate that very often when these initiatives are put forward, the only thing we can contribute is rhetoric, and I hope that is not the case with the hon. member opposite.

**Mr. Parm Gill (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank the hon. minister for his hard work in bringing this piece of legislation forward to help our veterans and for his commitment and hard work toward not just the veterans but also the families of veterans.

My question for the minister is this: how does this fit into his overall vocational rehabilitation plan? He just announced an increase to \$75,800 of the cap for education. Also, I understand eventually this piece of legislation will appear before the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs. Could he also highlight a message he has for members of the committee as to how we would like to deal with this in an expedient manner?

**Hon. Julian Fantino:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member not only for his question but for his efforts and great assistance and support in this particular area of veterans issues.

One of the things we are trying to do is improve on many different fronts the response our government continues to make to veterans and their families; for example, since about 2005 some \$5 billion of net new money has gone into programs and services and other support for veterans.

We have consistently improved on the new veterans charter, with enhancements that will in essence allow veterans to avail themselves of much more resources and support, up to and including cutting their grass, shovelling their snow or cleaning their homes, if they are not able to do it themselves.

That said, it is important to note as well that the parliamentary committee on veterans affairs has been requested, or commissioned, so to speak, to delve into the new veterans charter to see what improvements can be made to upgrade our response to continue to keep the veterans issues on the forefront, as we have been doing. To that end, I believe the committee will be acting post-haste in this particular area and we will receive back recommendations that will enable us to increase, enhance and continue to work on veterans issues.

*Government Orders*

● (1540)

**Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to thank our veterans who serve us very bravely overseas over the years. We also have an obligation to take care of our veterans when they return from wars.

In a number of cases, veterans have come to my office who are having a very difficult time accessing these benefits through the government.

In my riding, there is a veteran who served in Afghanistan and came back and has been asked to wait five months before a psychological doctor can be seen. Literally, this veteran is out in the cold. He is going to be out on the street. My question for the minister is this: why does it take five months to see a doctor so this veteran can get his benefits?

**Hon. Julian Fantino:** Mr. Speaker, one thing I have learned in my lifetime is to never guess at giving answers when I do not have the facts. I do not know the facts, but if the member opposite would like to share—

Mr. Speaker, the member can smile and ridicule all he wants. I do not have an answer to that. I do not know what he is talking about.

I am offering him the opportunity, as a reasonable, understanding person, if he wishes to pursue this issue, to have me listen to him. I would be more than happy to do that. Otherwise, I do not know what he is talking about.

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I appreciate hearing the comments of the minister with regard to looking for ways to support veterans who have been released from the armed forces. He did ask for ideas and input from the members on this side of the House; therefore, my question relates to the release process.

The legislation would actually complicate the release process and would potentially delay the released member's beginning to seek employment and so on, because of additional red tape.

I was recently at the Legion Command for Alberta and Northwest Territories and met with some of the senior executives there. There are deep concerns about the release process already. The poppy fund is being used to bridge the gap when forces members are released, because the processing is so slow that they are not receiving any of the benefits to which they are entitled. They are unable to pay the rent at times, and so the poppy fund is stepping in.

How would the minister ensure that this additional red tape on the release process—a process that already is backlogged, not working and costing our recently released forces members—would not make it worse for all the members who are leaving the armed forces?

**Hon. Julian Fantino:** Mr. Speaker, we are absolutely allergic to red tape. We are trying to find ways to streamline all of the services and support systems to veterans. An example of that is the elimination of 1.2 million documents annually that Veterans Affairs Canada would have processed, and did process, with regard to expenses that were being incurred by veterans with respect to their very basic needs. For those who could not look after their own homes, Veterans Affairs Canada does that.

However, having said all that, we would not be increasing bureaucracy. This is far from it. This would enable a streamlined effort to ensure a smooth transition between being serving members in the military and veterans.

Admittedly, this is the purpose of the comprehensive review of the new veterans charter. If there are hiccups, if there are issues, if there are concerns, if there are gaps, we encourage the member to bring those to the attention of the committee and they will be dealt with.

● (1545)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased today to speak to Bill C-11, introduced by the Minister of Veterans Affairs. This is only the second bill since the Conservative government came to power. That is very little considering all the issues that have been raised, including in the ombudsman's reports, and the recommendations on how to improve the new veterans charter.

It is a little disappointing that our government has so often ignored our national heroes over the past six years. The worst part is that the new veterans charter was supposed to be a living document, but the bill we are about to debate does not deal with the new charter. Contrary to what the minister was saying in response to the parliamentary secretary, the new veterans charter has not been routinely improved; it was improved only once.

When the charter was adopted in 2006, the concept of a living document meant that the charter would be amended as problems emerged. In the mission in Afghanistan, our troops suffered heavy losses. There were 158 deaths, and over 2,000 wounded soldiers came back, not to mention those who will be diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder in the coming years. According to a recent study, that is 14% of our troops, but we suspect that the number of injured soldiers and soldiers affected by stress is much higher.

It is against that backdrop that the new veterans charter was adopted by Parliament on the condition that it be a living document. That meant that it was going to be amended a number of times if required, as needs arose, or if the charter proved to be inadequate, as has been shown by the issues and comments raised in the past two years.

Since they came to power, the Conservatives have not kept that promise. The charter was amended only once in 2011, by means of Bill C-55. After seven years, a minister has finally decided to review the new charter in its entirety. It is not official, however, because the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs has not yet begun the official review. As specified in Bill C-55, that study was supposed to have begun on October 4. Today is November 21 and the House adjourns on December 11, so we will have hardly any time to begin studying the new charter before the House adjourns for the holidays, and we will not be starting again until next February.

*Government Orders*

That leads us to today's debate on Bill C-11, An Act to amend the Public Service Employment Act. Essentially, this bill seeks to give priority to veterans and members of the Canadian Forces who are released for medical reasons that are attributable to service. If, during the hiring process, the veteran demonstrates the essential qualifications required, the Public Service Commission will have to appoint that person in absolute priority, ahead of employees who are considered surplus or on leave. They will henceforth be in the highest category of hiring priority.

A second provision of the bill deals with the extension of the entitlement to priority, from two years to five. At the moment, veterans are in a regulatory category whereas public service employees are protected by the act. The government has therefore decided to include veterans in a category that is protected by the Public Service Employment Act.

This is a noble gesture on the part of the government. However, like the measures it has taken previously, such as the Last Post Fund, and the reimbursements for training and post-secondary education, these are half-measures that will have little impact on the quality of life of most veterans.

We will therefore support this bill at second reading, but we consider that it does not go far enough and that it raises questions that the government will have to answer. Moreover, in a climate of budget cutting, where we are seeing massive layoffs in the public service, this bill unfortunately will not really help veterans to get jobs in the public service, at least in the medium term.

This bill is actually a reaction to poor human resources management. The Conservatives have laid off so many public servants that veterans are no longer successful in being hired from the priority list.

• (1550)

What is most disappointing about the measures this government has introduced is the little impact they have had. I will not start listing off everything from 2006 on. I will only go back as far as the last budget, tabled in 2013.

The Conservatives announced with great fanfare that they were going to improve the Last Post Fund and double the refundable amount from close to \$4,000 to a little under \$8,000. An ombudsman, Patrick Stogran, had been mentioning this problem since at least 2009. The government waited some three or four years before addressing it. I would like to point out that it was a Liberal government that gutted the program in 1995 or thereabouts.

More recently, the Conservatives announced that they were increasing aid for training and post-secondary education, with maximum funding of \$75,800 per veteran and a maximum envelope of \$2 million over five years. As they say, the devil is in the details.

Although I do not know exactly how many veterans will apply for assistance under the program, let us take the amount of \$2 million, for example, and divide it by \$75,800, which is an accurate amount for someone going to university. If veterans receive the maximum amount, only 27 of them will have access to the program over this five-year period. Therefore, a little over five veterans a year will have access to the program.

I do not see how these measures will help our veterans. The Conservatives say they are increasing aid, but the criteria are often so strict that no one qualifies for it. It is easy to pull numbers out of the air and then make sure the criteria are so restrictive that the government will not be out of pocket at the end of the day. That is what the Conservatives are doing. They are using these tactics and saying that they are helping veterans, when what they are really doing is balancing the budget at their expense.

Now there is this bill that gives veterans priority for appointment to public service jobs. At first glance, it is a wonderful measure. However, on closer inspection, this bill is much less attractive because few public service jobs will be available in the coming years.

From 2006 to 2011, about 2,000 veterans made use of this priority entitlement. Of that number, 1,024 veterans secured a job in the public service. Of those 1,024 veterans, 739—72%—got a job with National Defence.

At Veterans Affairs Canada, the situation is somewhat dire. Between 2006 and 2011, only 24 veterans got jobs at VAC, which corresponds to only 2% of all jobs.

However, our veterans, who have experienced the difficulties involved in the transition to civilian life, should be ideal candidates for jobs at Veterans Affairs Canada. They should play a key role in the development of VAC policies to ensure that those policies are designed for them and meet their needs.

The second-largest employer of veterans in the public service is the Correctional Service of Canada, which hired 54 veterans during that period, or 5% of all veteran hires. The Department of Human Resources and Skills Development is not very far behind with 44 hires, or 4% of the jobs obtained during this period.

When we look at these figures, it is clear that not all departments are making the same effort to hire veterans. Indeed, most departments have hired fewer than ten veterans, while others have hired none.

Therefore, these departments would have to undergo a major culture change to ensure that such measures actually help our veterans. As things stand right now, I am not sure that this will help even things out in terms of hiring more veterans in our public service.

The Ombudsman has found that about 4,500 veterans per year participate in vocational rehabilitation services. On average, 220 veterans put their names on list of those eligible for job priority status, and, as a result, 146 veterans on average get a job in the public service. This is a very small number. This does not make much of an impact on the majority of veterans or even on many of them.

Moreover, the job priority status for veterans applies only to a very specific group.

• (1555)

The vast majority of jobs in the public service require bilingualism, a post-secondary diploma or even university education. Two to four years of experience is often also required.

*Government Orders*

Under current regulations, veterans are given a two-year priority entitlement. The veteran must already have a diploma in hand because there is not enough time to start a university degree. Even now, with the new deadline, there is not enough time for a veteran to go to university, if he so wishes, and be available within the time prescribed.

In addition, veterans who do not have a university degree are not overly interested in going to university for the extended period required. As I said earlier, 4,500 veterans participate in the vocational rehabilitation program each year. Only 63 veterans chose university-level programs; 32 received support from Veterans Affairs Canada and 31 received support through the service income security insurance plan. The other participants chose vocational training or college-level programs that lasted anywhere from 12 to 24 months.

That number, 63, caught my attention. Is it true that only 63 veterans chose university-level programs, or are people being discouraged from choosing such programs because of the severely restrictive criteria?

The Ombudsman wrote the following in his report:

While...Veterans Affairs Canada profess[es] to consider the needs of the client/Veteran, they normally do not permit training or education in a new career field if, at the time of release...the client...has skills that are transferrable to the...workforce....

They are required to take a job that does not interest them or one that pays less than a career requiring post-secondary education, simply because they have skills.

The government does not want to do anything that will cost a lot of money. That is the conclusion. In the end, it is not need that influences the decisions, it is the cost of funding education.

The government is putting a lot of focus on the Helmets to Hardhats program, as though the construction industry were the miracle cure for job transition for our veterans. I agree, it is a good program, but it is not available in every province and it does not cover all trades. As I said, it is not available in Quebec, unfortunately. I have received calls from veterans who are disappointed that they cannot access this program because it is not available in Quebec.

I believe this restricts our veterans' ability to improve their quality of life and their job prospects. For example, the ombudsman recommends entering into partnerships with other industries and organizations, such as the Retail Council of Canada, the Canadian defence and security industries and the Aerospace Industries Association of Canada. We have to have more collaboration from private sector players, who are not always aware of veterans' skills. Unfortunately, human resources departments do not know how to interpret the CVs of military candidates. A recent study revealed the scope of the task. The Navigator study, conducted for the Veterans Transition Advisory Council in late August, found that most of the 850 employers consulted have little or no understanding of veterans' skills. Only 16% of employers make a special effort to hire veterans.

Almost half of employers believe that a university degree is more important than military service when hiring. Only 13% said that their human resources department knows how to interpret a resumé from a military candidate. We have to do more in this regard.

To my mind, this bill has a major flaw. First, we have to remember that only Canadian Forces members medically released for service-related reasons will have access to the program. Previously, to be given priority, members of the Canadian Forces and the RCMP had to be released for medical reasons, whether they were service-related or not. That is also the spirit of the new charter. To qualify for Veterans Affairs Canada benefits and services, the injury has to be service-related. If the department ruled otherwise, the veteran could appeal the decision to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board and then the Federal Court. Unfortunately, this is no longer clear.

● (1600)

In addition, if a veteran needs to appeal a decision before a Canadian Forces tribunal or the VRAB, the procedures involved in these administrative tribunals can be very long. Does this mean that the duration of the priority, which begins the day the soldier is released from duty, continues to run out while these administrative procedures drag on? The ombudsman had this to say recently on his blog:

However, under the new legislation, the system will have to adjudicate an individual's file to determine if the medical release is related to service or not. This could add additional red tape to the release process and potentially delay the ability to access priority hiring upon release.

Like the ombudsman, we are worried about this uncertainty. Would it not be better to use the recognition of the link between the injury and the service to determine the accessibility and length of the priority entitlement? This could be done two ways: either the reason for release is designated "service-related medical release" or the link between the injury and the service is recognized by VAC or the VRAB. Either way, the system remains consistent, some of the red tape can be avoided and we could ensure that veterans do not lose their entitlement priority.

This bill also creates categories of veterans, and we are against that approach. The NDP supports the principle of having a single category of veterans. That is not what this bill does.

Veterans of the RCMP are not included in the bill and remain in the regulatory category. I think that a member of the RCMP who suffered a trauma and wanted to get out of the policing environment to start a new career could have benefited from priority hiring under this bill. Including veterans of the RCMP would have been a way of thanking them for their service and sacrifices. Now members of the Canadian Forces released for medical reasons attributable to service will have this priority entitlement and others will not.

This bill should have gone further. One major problem facing the Canadian Forces is the principle of universality of service, which requires members who cannot be deployed to be dismissed from the Canadian Forces. This is not entirely fair. We understand the importance of this principle to cohesion and morale, but would it not be possible to include the duty to accommodate principle?

*Government Orders*

Do those who served their country not deserve to be given a job where they could continue to serve? That is what the RCMP does for its members. The Minister of Veterans Affairs says that the Department of National Defence wanted to maintain the status quo on this. However, would it not be possible for the Standing Committee on National Defence to study this issue? Does this government not owe it to our troops and our veterans?

For months now we have been asking the government whether it realizes that it has a moral, social, legal and fiduciary obligation toward injured veterans. The government's lack of response would suggest not. The NDP has said time and time again that it will honour this century-long commitment made by successive Canadian governments, except for this one.

Again, the NDP will support Bill C-11, but the government will have to address our concerns in committee and make the necessary changes to ensure that this bill benefits the largest possible number of veterans who need this priority entitlement for a smooth transition and a better quality of life for them and their family.

• (1605)

[*English*]

**Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it saddens me in a way to hear so much negative focus on the work that we have been doing.

To be perfectly candid and up front, I do not agree with the member's assertion that nothing has been done with the new veterans charter. Almost \$5 billion in enhancements to the new veterans charter in the last few years is nothing short of remarkable.

I want to ask the hon. member opposite why his party has consistently voted against such things as \$8.5 million in funding to support service enhancements for the new veterans charter and almost \$700,000 in funding to improve service for severely injured veterans. There were monies to promote the well-being of current and former members of the navy, \$4.6 million to veterans' assistance programs to pay for health care costs not covered by the provincial health program, and I could go on.

I find it difficult to hear all this concern and all this criticism when in actual fact, year after year, budget after budget, that party has voted against our efforts to increase benefits, support, and services to veterans and their families.

Ultimately, the only thing I would like to ask is whether the member and his party are not in sync with our efforts to improve the quality of life for veterans and their families.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Sylvain Chicoine:** Mr. Speaker, I always have a good laugh when ministers and the members opposite say that the NDP or the opposition is always against their measures. Of course, their measures are 500 pages long, reams and reams of paper, and 80% of the content is bad. They ask us to vote for measures that we cannot even examine properly.

It is funny when the minister says that he has invested \$5 billion. He is so far from being transparent in his management that it is hard to figure out if all the money was spent. Recently, we were asked to vote for a budget that will grant more money, while the department

has probably not even spent all the money that Parliament granted it in the last budget.

It is somewhat inflammatory to say that we are against their measures when those measures are buried deep in omnibus bills. They should stop doing that. Canadians understand very well that we cannot support such bricks.

In addition, the ombudsman reviewed the new veterans charter and said that there were a number of problems with it. According to him, compensation is quite inadequate for many wounded soldiers, compared to regular workers who can challenge the decisions of workers' compensation boards and will receive a much higher amount than wounded Canadian Forces members.

A lot of improvements need to be made, and I hope that the minister will listen to the measures that we are going to propose during the study of the new charter.

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the NDP member for his speech and ask him a question.

I would like to know what the hon. member thinks about the situation of veterans, given what the minister told the public about them, namely, that veterans do not play a special role, that they are just like any other member of society, and that the government and Canadians do not have a sacred duty to treat them differently. Veterans' representatives and veterans themselves were very disappointed to hear that this government had broken this historic promise here in Canada.

Does the hon. member believe that this bill will undo the damage done by government lawyers and the minister himself? They broke this sacred contract between veterans and our country.

• (1610)

**Mr. Sylvain Chicoine:** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Vancouver Quadra for her excellent question.

Veterans have been forced to file numerous class action suits against the government, such as the veterans' suit in British Columbia.

Government attorneys deeply shocked veterans because they denied this social and moral contract, this moral and social obligation to take care of our wounded veterans.

The attorneys said that Canada had no duty to its veterans, even though this principle has been recognized for 100 years, since the beginning of the Canadian federation. It has never been questioned by any government.

We have had the opportunity to ask the minister countless times, and he refuses to recognize this sacred duty to take care of these veterans. That is scandalous, and my colleague is right to bring it up.

Veterans have been deeply shocked by the minister's attitude. He refuses to recognize this sacred obligation to take care of our country's wounded veterans. It is completely unacceptable.

Will this bill fix that problem? Absolutely not. It is not being addressed.

*Government Orders*

I ask the minister to recognize Canada's sacred obligation to take care of its veterans, because this is a given. I do not understand why this sacred obligation is being called into question. The minister should be ashamed that he will not recognize it.

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Châteauguay—Saint-Constant for his excellent speech and his remarkable work on the veterans file. I know he is very passionate about it and knows the file very well.

It is unfortunate to see the continued intellectual dishonesty of the Conservatives, who think that Canadians can be manipulated. They say that we voted against this and that and against so much money, when the Conservatives know very well that things do not work that way.

In their 500-page omnibus budget bill, there was hardly more than a few million dollars for veterans. For a file as important as the veterans file, it is unfortunate that we continue to hear their old rhetoric that does not hold water.

Our party will work with the other parties and try to improve the bill in the next stages.

We intend to work very hard to improve it, even though we sometimes have difficulty being heard by the government side. Although we have a government that is always unreceptive to our ideas, we will try to improve it.

**Mr. Sylvain Chicoine:** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Sherbrooke for his question and his comments.

We remind Canadians that the minister has once more accused the opposition of not supporting his measures. Some of them are good, perhaps, but burying so few good measures deep in mammoth bills is not the way to do things.

The minister said that they have spent more money, but if we look at the budget of the Department of Veterans Affairs, we see that it has been reduced by tens of millions of dollars. They tell us that they are pouring in more money, but that is not the case. They are balancing the budget on the backs of our nation's heroes.

We have certainly seen some shortcomings in the bill, as I mentioned. I am not sure that it is going to help a lot of veterans in the medium term.

We are in a climate of budget cuts; thousands of public service jobs are being eliminated. I do not see how this bill is going to help many veterans, at least in the medium term. When we come back in 2015, when we can start hiring again and stop cutting services to Canadians, perhaps this bill will help. Until then, it needs a number of improvements.

We must improve the situation of the veteran whose injury is not immediately attributable to service and who, after going to the VRAB, gets a ruling in his favour two or three years later. This is a shortcoming that certainly needs to be corrected because that veteran will only have one or two years left in which to get a job in the public service. That is one of the things that needs to be improved.

• (1615)

[English]

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, you were sitting in the chair yesterday when there was an exchange between this side of the House and the government side about medical records that have gone missing.

I understand the parliamentary secretary has said something to the effect that after looking into it, there could be some people whose files could be missing.

I want to quote from an article that appeared today in *The Globe and Mail* on page A4. It is headed "Veteran continues to search for missing medical files", and it reads as follows:

Former infantry corporal Kenneth Young tried for years to obtain the medical records related to his treatment at a now-closed veterans' hospital only to learn they had been destroyed in 2009, along with more than 27,000 boxes of other veterans' medical files.

That is 27,381 medical boxes of files to be exact.

The article continues:

He kept pestering the bureaucrats to find them "and it got to the point where they said 'don't write us any more. If you have any other problems or questions, contact the Privacy Commissioner.' Which I did," he said. "A few months later [the Privacy Commissioner] called me up and said 'well, your files were destroyed.'"

The Privacy Commissioner's office sent Mr. Young an e-mail from 2009 in which Valerie Stewart, the supervisor of national information holdings for Veterans Affairs, explained to department staff that Library and Archives Canada had "reviewed the hospital patient files and determined that they do not have archival value."

Ms. Stewart went on to say that officials at the Veterans Affairs department had "determined there is no potential research value in these files," and urged that "we proceed with the destruction of these files ASAP."

The article goes on to quote the parliamentary secretary, mentioning him by name, which I shall not do because I know we cannot in this House, who said, "Indeed, no active, living veteran's file was involved in this process."

There we have it. I know I am not supposed to show this to the House, but here is the picture of the veteran. He is alive. He is 65 years old, yet the department had him as dead.

There are many other such veterans whose files have gone missing, have been "plucked", if I may use that word, as a lot of veterans are saying. There are even orderlies coming forward saying that they were ordered to cleanse the files and encouraged to pull stuff out of the files.

I accept my hon. friend's view of his mistake, and I hope we both wish Mr. Young to live to be a very old man.

That said, in the spirit of friendliness, allow me to speak to Bill C-11 and say that we will be supporting it.

However, I will start off by proposing a change straight off the bat. Maybe the minister will take this as an offer that we on this side of the House would like to work with him.

I could be mistaken, but in looking carefully at this bill, I did not see any funds allocated in order to provide a bridge for the veterans so that they can learn the job they are applying for or to give them training for the job they are applying for.



*Government Orders*

A lot of the veterans were in the army. We taught them one skill: to kill or be killed, to survive in order to be able to kill tomorrow, if I can put it bluntly. From the stories they have been telling us, not only have they learned how to do a lot of things, but many have said that they were trained to provide us the democracy we have here today.

• (1620)

I am sure that the minister, in his previous life as an officer, was also trained in some of these very skills. However, we also have to provide the necessary tools to apply those skills in new jobs that have supposedly been opened in the department.

That said, I hope the minister will take this as an offer and say that the government will provide the training and the money that are needed. Since this is a bill from the government, with changes that require money, this is something the minister can certainly look into.

There are two small problems. Placing injured veterans at the head of the hiring line is an empty pledge unless money for readjusting and retraining comes with it, especially in an era when the federal government is laying off government workers and there is a hiring freeze. On one hand, we are saying that we are going to give veterans the right to be at the front of the line, and on the other, we have hiring freezes. I still have a little bit of difficulty comprehending that.

Bill C-11 should not replace the government's obligation to help Canadian Forces members stay in the forces, if that is their wish. I keep referring to Corporal Dave Hawkins and Corporal Glen Kirkland. I will get to them in a few seconds.

Soldiers wounded in Afghanistan are coming forward about being discharged from the military against their will and before qualifying for their pensions. This breaks a Conservative government promise that service members injured in the line of duty should serve as long as they want in the Canadian Forces.

According to the National Defence and Canadian Forces Ombudsman, soldier support centres have been left acutely understaffed and unable to provide for troops dealing with physical and psychological injuries. The purpose of the centres is to help injured soldiers and members of the forces return to active duty and transition to civilian life.

This brings me to the issue of the nine centres the minister is so bent on closing. I would invite the minister, if he wishes, to take a trip. As a matter of fact, I will go with him to see the veterans. I am sure that the NDP and everybody here would go and meet the veterans.

Look at Ron Clarke, who for years has been a Conservative member. If I were to repeat in the House what he said about the minister in that part of the world, I would probably get kicked out. He says, "my royal..." whatever. It is unparliamentary so I will not repeat it. Maybe I will let the member or somebody tune into YouTube to see it.

I will say, though, that they want to close nine centres. That is 26,788 veterans who will have to drive. Veterans will have to drive from Windsor, Ontario, to London, Ontario. That is a two-hour drive. Veterans will have to drive from Sydney, Nova Scotia, to Halifax, Nova Scotia. If it is winter, and they have to go over Kellys

Mountain, it is not a pleasant drive. It can take a veteran five or six hours to get across. If some of the veterans are 80 years old, are we asking them to do that drive? Is that what this country is asking a veteran to do? The veterans fought to put us in front of the line. These are the veterans who fought for us to have the democracy we have in the House. I am sure that is not what the minister wants.

Here is an opportunity for the minister to say that yes, he might have made a mistake. Yes, we are going to wait another 15 years until the Second World War veterans and the Korean War veterans, who are the primary people using the centres, have left us behind. We are not going to ask an 80-year-old man or woman to fill in a form with somebody on the line at the 1-800 number. We are not going to ask a veteran to be at the back of the line at a government services office, when he or she fought to keep us in front of the line.

• (1625)

I am sure that the minister, being a veteran of the Toronto, London, and Markham forces and the OPP force, knows for a fact that not only veterans have fought to protect this country. Police officers who risk their lives in duty on an everyday basis need to be respected and in front of the line.

Maybe the minister wants to reconsider the judgment made. Maybe it was made before he got there. Maybe he wants to consider that having the veterans go through all those hoops is not the Canadian way. When the minister swore an oath to protect some of us who live in Toronto, London, or York Region, and the majority of the members of Parliament in this House who live in Ontario, we needed to respect what he did for us.

Why, in the same breath, are we disrespecting the thousands of veterans who were not hesitant for 30 seconds to give up their lives for us in World War II, Korea, the United Nations, NATO, Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, and Croatia? The list goes on and on.

The minister might have a change of heart and when he goes home tonight will say that we will keep those nine centres open for the next couple of years, especially for World War II and Korean War veterans.

In the past year, the Canadian Armed Forces has been forcing personnel with service-related injuries to leave the Canadian Armed Forces before they qualify for their pensions. Corporal Glen Kirkland, who suffers from physical and emotional wounds as a result of a Taliban bomb that killed three comrades, was being forced to leave the CAF because he did not meet the military universality of service requirements.

Last June, the Minister of National Defence said in the House of Commons that any Afghan vet injured in combat would not be released as a result of these injuries.

*Government Orders*

Recently, Corporal David Hawkins, a reservist from St. Thomas, Ontario, with post-traumatic stress, was forced out a year before he was able to collect a fully indexed pension. On October 30, 2013, the Minister of National Defence said in this House of Commons, "...we want to thank Corporal Hawkins...". That is a great opening. He continued, "...for his service and sacrifice for Canada". That is outstanding. He continued, "Before being released, members of the Canadian Armed Forces work with the military on a transition plan. Ill and injured Canadian Forces members are provided with physical, mental and occupational therapy services for their eventual transition to civilian life. Members are not released until they are prepared". Well, Corporal Hawkins was released before he was well prepared.

If Corporal Hawkins were to apply to get a job with any department, he might have to get a bit of training. He might need a couple of bucks to get retrained in order to apply. Maybe some money will have to be allocated in the department so that this injured vet, suffering with post-traumatic stress disorder, is able to qualify to do that job. Corporal David Hawkins was not prepared to be released.

The Minister of Veterans Affairs is trying to find a way to show that the Conservative government is caring for injured veterans while not coming clean on a lot of these issues.

I will continue. The Veterans Ombudsman stated in a press release, when he made the following observations on Bill C-11:

...under the new legislation, the system will have to adjudicate an individual's file to determine if the medical release is related to service or not. This could add additional red tape to the release process and potentially delay the ability to access priority hiring upon release.

...it will create separate classes of Veterans for federal priority hiring...all medically releasing [sic] Canadian Armed Forces members should be treated the same way, because there is an inherent service relationship for every Canadian Armed Forces member who is medically released because the individual can no longer serve in uniform.

...losing one's career as a result of a medical condition is unique to service in the military.

● (1630)

Other questions were raised by the Veterans Ombudsman. Maybe the minister might want to stand up and answer them during question and answer.

Which department will do the adjudication? What documentation will be used in the adjudication process? Will benefit of the doubt criteria be established? How long will the process take? How much visibility will the member have in the process? Will there be an appeal process? If a definition is made that a medical release is not service related, will it affect the decision-making for another benefit program, such as the disability award?

I can say what is in the media. This is from November 8:

Sensing the lousy optics of unhappy vets during Remembrance Week, the government has pledged to give discharged soldiers first crack at civil service jobs. Given that the feds are cutting staff, this is an empty promise. And it's doubtful many of those scarce jobs could actually be filled by soldiers unfit for military duty.

Here is another one from the *National Post*. "Ottawa fails veterans with cynical displays of show over substance". Barbara Kay writes:

Recently the government proudly announced two new initiatives. The first pledges to give priority to veterans seeking civil service jobs. But Mr. Parent points out that thousands of veterans are incapable of working due to injuries suffered during their service. And since hiring freezes are in place over most of the federal

departments, "priority" consideration for frozen jobs is not of much use. The other initiative increases funding for vocational rehabilitation programs to \$75,800 per veteran. But the fine print belies the seeming generosity. The money is allocated at \$2 million over five years, spread over 1,300 veterans. That comes to \$1,500 each, unless 40-some veterans get all of it.

I hope that the Minister of Veterans Affairs has paid attention and will have the generosity today to accept the amendment from this side of the House that money be allocated for veterans to be retrained and that there be a sum for each veteran. Second, I hope that the minister stands up, after my pleading with him, and says that they will keep these nine centres open, which affect 26,788 veterans, for the next 10 or 15 years. If he gets up and says anything about the 600 points and "da de da de da and we're going to their houses", the veterans are watching. They know that it is totally bellowing. We will leave it at that.

**Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I cannot even begin to respond to the lack of factual data and the ongoing scaremongering that have come from the member.

Admittedly, there is always room for improvement. Perfection is not of this world. I do not profess that Canadian Forces personnel are perfect in every way. However, it is really difficult to hear that kind of rant and not have some appreciation for the men and women who work so hard to provide the best possible services they can to support our veterans. However, I will not go into that.

I would like to give the member the opportunity to respond. He talks a lot about giving money to veterans who are injured in service, et cetera. I have to reflect back on his comments:

...that's like hanging a case of beer in front of a drunk...they go and spend it, either trying to buy a house or buying a fast car or spending it on booze or addiction.

That is such an irresponsible, out-of-touch comment. I would like to give the member opposite an opportunity to relate to that particular comment and his rhetoric just now.

I also take exception to his comment that all we do with our veterans is teach them to kill or be killed. That is such an uninformed, uneducated, crass comment that I cannot even begin to express myself. I will give the member opposite an opportunity to answer.

● (1635)

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Mr. Speaker, I thought I would be polite to the minister. When the minister comes up with such rants, I am going to try to be very nice, because if I were to say that when God was giving out brains, the minister might have heard "trains", it would be irresponsible of me.

*Government Orders*

If I were to say that for ages I was telling the minister that medical files were being destroyed, but he was in denial until it hit the press this morning, or if I were to say that 26,788 veterans would be affected and encourage the minister to look the veterans in the eyes, as I have been doing constantly, and they have not been listened to, then I might be correct in the first statement I made. I said we teach our soldiers to defend us. If push comes to shove, they will defend us.

Unfortunately, after all the accolades that I was trying to sing to the minister or say to minister for his years of service as a police officer, if he were not right now standing up to defend our veterans, it would be a disservice to the House of Commons and a disservice to his record as a police officer.

Mr. Speaker, through you, I have a last challenge for the Minister of Veterans Affairs. Would he do the right thing and look the veterans in the eyes? Turn around, Minister, there is a veteran up there.

I know, Mr. Speaker, I should not have said that.

Look him in the eyes, Minister—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Order, please.

I would remind hon. members to direct their comments through the Chair.

I would also remind hon. members that characterizations of individual members in the House or other parliamentarians are generally bound by parliamentary language. I did not hear anything specifically, but it was pretty close. Once we tip into that kind of discourse in the House, invariably disorder can occur and that is when we get some unparliamentary scenarios arising.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech. One of the questions I have for him is with regard to the opportunity for veterans who are disabled, either physically or psychologically, to be retrained and have opportunities for them, their spouses, and their families to enter into the workforce to become productive citizens once again and to feel that they add worth to our society. That is the whole aspect of the new veterans charter.

However, the problem is that a lot of additional benefits that these veterans may require are very difficult to access. The bureaucracy to get them is quite challenging.

First, I would like to congratulate my hon. colleague on his new post as critic for the federal Liberal Party and wish him good luck in that assumption. I would also like to let him know that I will assist him, and the government, at any time, when it comes to issues of veterans affairs.

I wonder if he would comment on my comment. That would be greatly appreciated.

• (1640)

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Mr. Speaker, I want to congratulate my colleague from the NDP on being named “parliamentarian of the

year”, if I am not mistaken. I am sure that everyone in the House will certainly join me in doing that.

We all bought into the new veterans charter. It was sold to all parties. We voted on it. No member from that time to now is to be excluded, myself included.

However, we have understood there are difficulties with it and we have seen that some changes are needed. I have heard from a lot of veterans that the old way was that they would be given a pension and there was no retraining, there were no other things available, and that maybe some of the things in the NVC should be kept, such as giving returning wounded soldiers a lump sum, but as well, giving them a monthly pension.

Just to clarify, the minister left out some of my comments when I quoted the executive director of Wounded Warriors when I was on *Power & Politics*.

In the letter that the Conservative Party sent out, it had “...” and left out some of what I said, which is a real shame on the Conservatives who tried to use that as a fundraising tool. Again that is certainly not respecting the veterans.

I am looking forward to working with the NDP, as well as the government, in order for us to come to some understanding that we need to make changes.

I proposed changes today. It is really a shame. Instead of hearing, “Yep, you got a good point there. We’d like to help you”, I got a personal attack again from the minister.

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague from Scarborough—Agincourt for his passion and support for veterans and the hard work he has done on this new portfolio.

There have been a number of times that the government and the minister have had the answer that the minister had to my question today, which is that we will look at these issues in the parliamentary committee review that he is initiating. However, we have heard from many veterans organizations, Equitas and other representatives, that an extensive study of the new veterans charter has already taken place and the solutions to some of the things that the hon. member raised have already been analyzed and identified in a previous study.

I would like to ask my colleague whether this may be a delaying tactic, this grab bag answer for any of the concerns of veterans that we will look at it in a parliamentary committee study. Is that adequate, or are there things that could be done now to address concerns of the veteran community?

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Mr. Speaker, one of the things I am hearing from veterans right across the country from coast to coast is that they want us to hear their stories and how it is affecting their families. I have been hearing from other veterans that we need to invite the wives of veterans to come to committee to tell us how their lives have changed.

*Government Orders*

One of the things I have heard also from a lot of veterans is that the government always speaks of a couple of scenarios like Helmets to Hardhats and the hire a vet program. They are saying it is a whitewash. They say there is nothing there. The government gives \$150,000 in order to create a website for Helmets to Hardhats, and wherever they go they blow it up and blow it up. We need real answers and not hot air, as it comes from the House, especially from some people on the front bench.

**Mr. Parm Gill (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me first say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Etobicoke Centre.

It is a great pleasure and privilege to join in the debate today on our government's proposed changes to provide greater priority hiring opportunities for Canada's veterans.

These changes go to the core of so many Canadian values and priorities. We value devotion to duty. We value and salute those who are prepared to step forward and defend our way of life. We are grateful for the sacrifices of those who protect our shared values of freedom, democracy and human rights.

Of course, Canadians trust that their elected representatives will do everything they can to ensure that Canada's veterans are supported in every way during and after their military service. When we, as parliamentarians, accept that trust, we must also understand that it is not a simple promise entered into lightly. We cannot break faith with those who have displayed and continue to display the highest of ideals in the defence of our country and of our allies. Today we have an opportunity to further demonstrate that we are keeping our word.

As outlined earlier by the hon. Minister of Veterans Affairs, we are introducing important changes to create a five-year priority entitlement for Canadian veterans who are medically released for service-related reasons.

Before I go any further in reviewing the details regarding the proposed priority hiring of Canada's veterans, I would like to offer my congratulations and gratitude to the Minister of Veterans Affairs who continues to build upon the accomplishments of this government and his predecessor. It is that record of action that makes me so proud to serve in a government committed to ensuring that all those who wear our nation's uniform, past and present, have the care and support they need, when they need it.

As was noted in the Speech from the Throne last month, we have invested almost \$5 billion since 2006 in new funding to enhance veterans' benefits, programs, and services. Through the new veterans charter, we are now providing full physical and psycho-social rehabilitation services. We are providing career transition services, financial support, health care benefits, and one-on-one case management services.

What does this all mean for a veteran?

On a practical level, as the minister has said on numerous occasions, it means many things. It means we can provide up to \$75,800 in training assistance for eligible veterans to start a new career. If a veteran is too seriously injured to work again, we would transfer the vocational support to his or her spouse.

There are many other things we can do for veterans, such as helping veterans with shovelling snow from their laneways or cutting their grass, having meals prepared in their homes or delivered to their front doors, having health care professionals and a Veterans Affairs Canada case manager visit them in their own homes, and reimbursing veterans for the cost of travelling to their medical appointments.

We do all these things because we are determined to help injured and ill veterans make the best recovery possible as quickly as possible. We are also committed to ensuring veterans experience a seamless transition to civilian life.

The amendments before us build on that. With these amendments, we would create a five-year statutory priority for Canadian veterans who are medically released for service-related reasons. This change would give these veterans the highest level of consideration for jobs in recognition of their sacrifice and service to Canada.

● (1645)

We understand that while men and women with disabilities may no longer be able to meet the universality of service provision to continue serving in the Canadian Armed Forces, they are still capable of making significant contribution in service of their country. That is what these amendments would do, plain and simple. These amendments would allow them to continue leading and serving a great country.

Additionally, through changes that would follow in the act's accompanying regulations, full-time regular, and reserve force veterans who are medically released for non-service-related reasons would see their existing level of priority extended from two years to five years. We would make the regulatory changes retroactive to April 1, 2012, so veterans who may have lost their priority status since then are eligible again for another five full years.

I do want to be clear about one thing. These amendments would not guarantee veterans a job in the federal public service. Instead, they would ensure that qualified veterans have the highest priority for new job openings. Canada's veterans understand, given the terms and conditions of their own military careers, that there can be no guarantees about what tomorrow will bring.

However, these amendments before us do offer greater certainty. They are progressive and responsible steps forward to recognize the service and sacrifice of those who serve our country so well and who wish to continue to serve Canada after their military career has ended.

These amendments send a clear signal, a clear message, to Canada's men and women in uniform that our government places a high value on their skills, their training and their experience, and we do not want to lose that. These are skills we need to promote and retain, whenever appropriate and possible.

*Government Orders*

Put simply, these amendments are a logical reflection of our desire to keep the highly qualified individuals who have received world-class training and who have consistently demonstrated the ability to apply their skills in situations that the majority of Canadians would never face or know.

We have a potential talent pool offering demonstrated leadership and an ability to think strategically. In short, we have a group of Canadians renowned for getting the job done.

Any employer in the private or public sector would be foolhardy to ignore such skills or dismiss such potential. Our government would never make such a mistake, and we encourage other levels of government to follow our lead.

However, first we need to make good on these changes. We need to make sure they are quickly approved. We need to ensure that the Public Service Commission is a willing and enthusiastic partner, and we need to put measures in place to ensure the full intent and spirit of these changes is realized. We can do that.

Together, we can deliver further meaningful support for the men and women who have served Canada so well. I encourage everyone here to help us make it happen quickly.

• (1650)

**Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, first, we all know that the Government of Canada has a “sacred duty” to care for our injured veterans. I thank all our veterans who have served on our behalf in different wars; but also let us acknowledge the men and women who are still serving today and are looking at how we handle issues like this bill.

The question I have is a fairly straightforward one. Why did the government decide to cap training expenses at \$2 million over five years? This would limit access to the program. Why is the government so determined to balance the budget on the backs of our heroes yet again? Does the government recognize the existence of a sacred duty toward our injured veterans?

• (1655)

**Mr. Parm Gill:** Mr. Speaker, as pointed out many times before in the House, our government is committed to supporting our veterans and men and women in uniform. As a matter of fact, our government has invested almost \$5 billion in additional funding since coming to office.

The question I would like to ask my hon. colleague is this: why have she and members of her party voted down virtually every single initiative that we have brought forward to support our veterans? It is about time for my hon. colleagues in the opposition parties to get on board and support the initiatives the government brings forward so we can help our veterans.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I find it most interesting that, when we take a look at the private sector or non-profit groups, we find they give a great deal of recognition to the types of skill sets and expertise that retiring members of the Canadian Forces have to offer. Commissionaires Manitoba is an excellent example. Many veterans serve, and serve well, within that organization.

The government has been found lacking in terms of being able to address the real need to provide funds. A good example of that was in yesterday's debate. I would encourage people to read the part of the debate in which the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs did not even acknowledge all the thousands of files that were destroyed. He made a very clear statement yesterday. He said they were all deceased. It is because of the work done by the Liberal critic that we found out the parliamentary secretary was wrong. We appreciate that there was an apology, but it has been recognized that there are issues.

My question to the member is this. When did he first find out that he was actually wrong, that there are in fact members alive today who had their medical records destroyed, and how many does he believe there are?

**Mr. Parm Gill:** Mr. Speaker, the kind of rhetoric we hear from the Liberal Party is absolutely unbelievable. Let me tell the members in that corner over there, the members of the Liberal Party, that there are absolutely no lessons we need to learn from them.

This is the Liberal Party that believes that giving money to veterans injured in service of Canada is, and I quote the member of the Liberal Party:

...like hanging a case of beer in front of a drunk.... They get the lump sum, they go and spend it, either trying to buy a house or buying a fast car or spending it on booze or addiction.

I would, once again, like to give the opportunity to the member opposite to apologize for his comments.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Mr. Speaker, I rise on the same point of order as I did last night. I hope that when the parliamentary secretary quotes something, he quotes the whole thing. If he is not able to quote the whole thing, then maybe he should exercise the zipper right across his mouth.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** As was the case last night, this is a matter of debate as to the facts that have been cited in various questions, comments, or speeches in the House on these matters. I thank the member for Scarborough—Agincourt for his intervention, but again, it really does not have the character of a point of order in this case.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Etobicoke Centre.

• (1700)

**Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to acknowledge and thank fellow members who have joined the debate on this important matter before the House. It is very important.

I listened closely to my colleague, the Minister of Veterans Affairs, as he outlined the rationale behind those proposed amendments to the Public Service Employment Act and its regulations.

*Government Orders*

I want to point out that the minister is an outstanding Minister of Veterans Affairs. He cares and he works hard. He has been on many panels. I have known him since before both of us were elected to this House, and he was on the national committee and the provincial committee for the Canadian Forces Liaison Council. What that did was help reservists and others match up with jobs, as well as get employers to release reservists for very needed deployments overseas. As we know, our deployments need between 20% and 25% reservists on a regular basis to allow our missions to succeed and to be able to top up the manpower that was so critically needed in operational zones.

I thank the minister for that, and I want to congratulate him on this initiative, which marks another step in the significant progress our government has made in supporting Canada's veterans. Like many members, I am proud of what we have accomplished, particularly as it relates to helping veterans and their families make a successful transition to civilian life. That is a sacred obligation we have, a sacred obligation on which we are following through.

Yesterday this minister tabled and outlined the 160 amendments he is making because of what veterans stakeholders and advisory groups have advised us. This government is listening very closely to what our veterans need, and we are applying that.

As the minister said earlier, nothing is perfect in life. Things change, situations change, circumstances change and we have to adapt to that. That is what we are doing right now, right this minute. We are making this program the best it can possibly be today for the veterans of Canada, as they deserve and as this government has committed to do.

For example, I was pleased with our government's launch of the veterans transition action plan last year, because it sets out a long-term strategy for supporting veterans in their transition to civilian life. That is a key component of this action plan, the cutting of red tape for veterans initiative. That is something the minister also mentioned today. We are absolutely allergic to red tape. We do not like it. Nobody likes it. It is bad for veterans, and we have to cut that out, all of it, when we find it, to make it easier for them to access the services.

We launched it in February 2012 with the single-minded purpose of providing veterans and their families with faster, hassle-free service, and that is what we have been doing. That is what we are going to continue to do.

I would like to highlight just a few things. For example, Veterans Affairs Canada's business processes are being streamlined. The department's policies and programs are being simplified. New technology and e-services are being used to meet the needs expressed by Canada's veterans. The results so far have been impressive.

Turnaround times for processing veterans' disability benefits have been improved, and access to rehabilitation services is now being approved in just two weeks instead of four. That is just the start of the accomplishments.

By the time this five-year initiative is fully implemented, Veterans Affairs Canada's programs, benefits and services will be the most

responsive, inclusive and flexible ever seen by Canada's veterans. We will be delivering them as quickly and efficiently as possible.

Veterans are already reaping many of the benefits. In October, for example, the Minister of Veterans Affairs announced a new approach to our vocational rehabilitation program, and that provides eligible veterans with up to \$75,800 in training to start a new career. That is a great amount of money and that is helpful in helping them start in the new careers, new trades, new skills to which they need to take the existing skills they have, which are world-class skills they have learned in the military, and translate those to a civilian career.

That is great news for approximately 1,300 veterans presently participating in vocational rehabilitation and vocational assessment services. These changes also build on other recent enhancements.

For example, the process for reimbursing veterans for travel costs to and from their medical appointments has been simplified. That means that about 18,000 veterans no longer need to send receipts or verify their appointments with the department to cover their travel expenses. That is a big administrative burden lifted off their shoulders. This one change has eliminated a lot of cumbersome paperwork for eligible veterans and is putting money back into their pockets faster.

● (1705)

The same is being done for more than 100,000 veterans, widows, and caregivers enrolled in a veterans' independence program. In January, veterans began receiving upfront payments for grounds maintenance and housekeeping services. They no longer have to pay out of their pocket for these services and then wait to be reimbursed. This is yet another administrative burden lifted off their shoulders. The full suite of e-services also ensures that veterans and their families can access the relevant information that they are looking for at any time of day or night.

These kinds of changes make a real difference. That is what the proposed legislative amendments will also do. With these changes to the Public Service Employment Act and its regulations, we will create a five year statutory priority entitlement for Canadian veterans who are medically released for service related reasons. This will move qualified veterans to the front of the line for new positions in the federal public service so these remarkable men and women, these patriots, can continue to serve our great country if they so chose.

Additionally, through the regulatory changes that would follow, full-time regular and reserve force veterans who are medically released for non-service related reasons will see their existing level of priority extended from two years to five years. It will also allow them a longer period of priority access to positions that they are qualified to fill. That is an incredible improvement.

*Government Orders*

These changes are also about providing veterans with real and meaningful new employment and career opportunities and doing so in recognition of their service and the sacrifices they have made in the name of Canada. Once these changes take effect, Canadian veterans medically released for service related reasons will be able to pursue new careers in the federal public service on a higher priority and a longer term basis than ever before. This is something that we are very proud to be doing for our veterans.

I know Canadians support this kind of honourable recognition and support for Canada's veterans. It reflects our nation's gratitude for everything our men and women in uniform, past and present, have done to protect and defend our democracy and our way of life. It also reflects our collective desire to continue to have highly-qualified Canadians putting their hard-earned skills and training to work for our country and ensuring that our economy continues to grow on the strength of a well placed workforce and employees who are realizing their full potential. When employers hire a veteran, they are hiring somebody with a tremendous tool kit of skills right now.

These proposed amendments to the Public Service Employment Act should also be viewed as another way to strengthen overall skill sets and therefore the overall effectiveness of the federal public service. It is not only a fair thing to do; it is the right thing to do. Quite frankly, it is the Canadian thing to do. I would hope that all levels of government across the country will do the same and adopt similar policies.

Canada's veterans only want a fair opportunity to find meaningful and rewarding employment when their military service to Canada ends. However, they sometimes do not fully realize how marketable their skills are, or how to explain their experience and training to civilian employers. This is something we help with through programs like Helmets to Hardhats and other initiatives that help veterans to translate those numerous skills they have. In this job, my veteran colleagues and I, who speak about this often, always relate back to the great skills that we learned in the Canadian Forces and how applicable they are to everything we do in life.

The amendments before us are one way to tear down those barriers. They are an expression of the value we place on our men and women in uniform. It is the right thing to do.

I want to address something that a member mentioned earlier about how the two particular priorities for Canadian soldiers are to kill or be killed. Quite frankly, it is nonsense. Members of the Canadian Armed Forces have a whole myriad of skills in their toolkits. For example, the most obvious right now relates to the DAR teams deployed to the Philippines. They are providing badly needed assistance to people in dire need. The people in these teams are engineers, people producing water and sanitary conditions. They are bringing food, helicopters, and other logistics to do that.

Canadian Armed Forces members aid civil authorities, such as at the Olympics in 2010. They perform diplomatic roles, for example, as attachés in our embassies around the world. They work as trainers for other armies, as our soldiers are doing in Kabul right now or in the Canadian Forces College.

●(1710)

In fact, some of the soldiers have continuing education. There are many members of the Canadian Armed Forces presently with master's degrees and Ph.D.s. They are a very accomplished lot.

The point of all of this is to help our veterans make that seamless transition to civilian life where they can best utilize the incredible skills they have learned through a lifetime of service to Canada.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member who just spoke. Like him, I appreciate the service of our veterans.

On November 11, like many members here, I took part in Remembrance Day events. I had the chance to meet many veterans who live in my riding. I would like to take this opportunity to commend and thank them once again for their commitment. I also wish to commend and thank our military personnel who continue to represent Canada here and abroad.

I wonder if the member could tell me why it is that none of the recommendations made by the ombudsman and the Auditor General were included in the bill. Why is it that a report was prepared and yet none of its recommendations seem to appear in this bill?

[*English*]

**Mr. Ted Opitz:** Mr. Speaker, the member has colleagues in her party who have served, and I applaud their service and thank them for it. They have done a tremendous job and serve in the House honourably.

Yesterday the minister tabled 160 amendments from veterans advocacy groups and advisory groups. That includes the whole gamut of people feeding into the Veterans Affairs file. If the member reads through some of those 160 amendments, she will find that many of those match up with the recommendations that are already on the table and made public.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, as a vet and having gone through boot camp, as I am sure my colleague across the way would acknowledge, a part of the program is that members do learn many different skills. However, let there be no doubt that it is drilled into recruits as part of that program the mentality when in a time of conflict or of war, it is kill or be killed. It is something that is talked about fairly directly during boot camp. I would not want the member to distort or take out of context what my colleague was putting on the record.

The specific question I have for the member is in regard to the Helmets to Hardhats program, something for which just a trickle of dollars is being provided, especially when we look at the lawsuits from the government against our vets. It is a small portion.

*Government Orders*

Does the member not believe that providing adequate or more financial resources for the Helmets to Hardhats program would be a positive step in getting more people employed? Especially if we look at the reduction in civil servants, it is not as if we will get many members of the forces retiring and going into the civil service. Programs such as Helmets to Hardhats, something which the Liberal Party has been a very strong advocate for, is a great program, but it lacks the financial resources to make it a strong, healthy program into the future.

**Mr. Ted Opitz:** Mr. Speaker, I applaud the hon. member for his service. He is a veteran of the air force, and I understand what he is saying about basic training.

I am an infanteer. I am one of those guys at the pointy end of the stick. That is what an infanteer does, what we do in combat arms. That is one of our roles, as we have seen in Afghanistan in its more extreme state: kill or be killed. That is war.

However, I want to point out for the hon. member that there are so many other skills. That is why Canadians across this planet, serving in our uniform, have made the best ambassadors for our country. It is because of all the tremendous skills they learn, aside from the basic reason for armies. They provide tremendous international support in terms of peacekeeping.

When I was in Bosnia, it was Canadians who were brilliant negotiators in being able to move around the country and work between the warring factions. Because we have that skill to fight, we are so formidable. We may not be the biggest army in the world, but we are the best. When people take on Canadians, they know they are in trouble.

I am very proud of my lineage. I did 33 years of this and I understand. I have eaten a lot of mud and dirt in my time in basic training. I applaud what the member is saying. The Helmets to Hardhats program is an excellent program. What I am afraid of, though, are the mischaracterizations of some of the members opposite and the poor information and understanding that certain members have of our Canadian Forces.

Quite frankly, the Liberal Party leader should fire his spokesman, because that—

• (1715)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Order, please. Before we resume debate, I will let the member for Sackville—Eastern Shore know that we do not have the full 20 minutes before the end of government orders. However, he will have about 13 minutes of that, so we will give him a signal, as we usually do, as we get close to that time.

The hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore.

**Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, first I personally want to thank the government for bringing forward this piece of legislation. I think it is an important topic. To me, any day that we can talk about veterans, RCMP members and their families, and the men and women who serve our country on a regular basis is always a good day for the House of Commons, because these are the types of subjects we should be discussing on a more constant basis.

Before I start, I want to give personal kudos to my colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, my personal friend and seatmate next to me in terms of the riding in Nova Scotia, for his father, who was known as W.L. “Red” Chisholm. He was in the Canadian Air Force. He received the DFC and bar. Unfortunately, he passed away in 2005. I want to offer the greatest round of applause and gratitude to my colleague, his late father, and all those who served our country for their tremendous service.

I understand exactly why the government brought this particular legislation forward. I am one of the few people here who had discussions with the late Jack Stagg, the former deputy minister and the former minister of veterans affairs, when it came to the actual implementation of the new veterans charter. Even though there are a fair number of concerns and issues with it, I am proud to say that I worked with our party to help the other parties get that legislation through, because in the end, when we compare apples to apples, it is a better program than it was before.

That said, there are many deficiencies within it.

Because it is a living document, everyone, including the veterans associations, was assured that when problems are recognized, the document could be opened up immediately and the problems dealt with right away. The unfortunate part is that the first crack in the charter was on Bill C-55, an important piece of legislation that received unanimous support from the House of Commons, in order to improve the lives of a lot of veterans out there financially.

We have heard other concerns with the new veterans charter. The reality is our committee will be looking at that hopefully in the most non-partisan way we can to, as the minister said yesterday, and in a proactive, non-partisan manner give recommendations to the minister so that the minister can then go to cabinet. We know that budget time is coming up and that all the departments will be looking at the same Canadian tax dollars and the best way to allocate them. I thank the minister and the parliamentary secretary for listening to the debate today. We would like to give him some basic recommendations that he can then take to cabinet to improve the lives of all veterans, RCMP members, and their families.

Getting back to the particular aspect of priority hiring for military personnel who leave the military either on a volunteer basis or through what we call a 3(b) release for either physical or psychological injuries, we applaud this idea, but in the veterans charter, priority hiring was one the major aspects. It shows us that the system did not really work well when legislation has to come forward seven years later to deal with this issue once again.

We found out over the years that the Department of National Defence was the biggest employer of veterans. The Department of Veterans Affairs was next. All of the other departments did very little in hiring veterans in that regard. Hopefully, with this legislation, we can encourage on a proactive basis, through the Public Service Commission and everyone else, the opportunity and ability for the heroes of our country to remain gainfully employed, because the entire aspect of the veterans charter, and this was the key selling point, was care, not cash.



*Government Orders*

I say this very clearly. The ability for them to understand that although they are 24 years old and injured they still have worth, not just to themselves and their families but also to their country, and the ability of the government of the day to provide programs and systems to ensure that they and their families get the benefits they richly deserve in order to lift themselves up, be gainfully employed, and have economic opportunities right through the natural part of their lives was the key to this.

I am pleased to see that the government has now offered an opportunity through legislation to ensure that we get this right. However, there are some questions we have to ask when the bill gets to committee.

● (1720)

I would like to tell the minister and the parliamentary secretary that the federal New Democrats will be supporting this legislation. We hope to be able to make some friendly amendments when it gets to committee on several things, such as who will be monitoring, through the Public Service Commission and departments of the federal government, to ensure this works for veterans and RCMP members.

We want to include RCMP members as well. It may be an oversight by the government, but because RCMP veterans also have to go to DVA to get their benefits, we feel they should also be included in this important legislation so that they too can have the opportunities that our military veterans may have in future employment with federal departments right across the country.

As has been said before by my hon. colleagues on both sides of the House, the men and women who serve in our military and RCMP have tremendous skills. Whether it is Helmets to Hardhats or working for the Coast Guard or CSIS or whatever it is that they do, these men and women can provide great service to all of Canada in this regard.

I am pleased to say that we will be supporting the bill, but we would like to see the RCMP included.

My second point is also very important. I met with many groups. I met with Helmets to Hardhats and with people in other departments, and I can say that an awful lot of veterans leave the military with some sort of psychological concern. Certain triggers can affect different veterans in different ways.

Maybe the department can take notes and get back to us on this point: will the department offer intense training to companies and departments throughout Canada on veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder or operational stress injury so that they will be able to understand sensitivities that a veteran may be going through and watch for triggers? A company may have a well-qualified veteran working for it, but in a new environment the veteran may experience something that triggers that reaction.

Several years ago at the DND dockyards, there was a veteran who got a job with the DND firefighters. The problem was, and this is no disrespect to them, that they were not properly advised or trained on the individual, their new buddy. This person had some pretty serious psychological concerns, but the people he was newly working with did not fully understand or appreciate what he was going through, so

he just could not work there any more. He could not handle the stress of that new environment.

This outcome can be avoided if we are proactive in this regard. When an individual who has PTSD, OSI, or a physical injury passes the qualifications and gets hired in a new department, the people in that department should already fully understand that veteran's situation. This is not only a hero of our country, but a person who has some concerns that he or she has to deal with on a regular or maybe a lifetime basis. We simply do not know. I think sensitivity shown to these individuals would be very helpful in integrating them into a new work environment.

I admit that I did not wear the uniform of Canada, but many of my friends and many colleagues in this House did. For those who have served for a long time, the military becomes a way of life. The RCMP becomes a way of life. For those who have been firefighters or police officers for many years, such as the Minister of Veterans Affairs, it becomes a way of life. However, the day comes when that uniform comes off. That is a pretty serious moment.

I remember many times people telling me that the proudest day they ever had was when they put on the red serge for the first time at Depot in Regina, and the saddest day was when they took it off. These are people who had a wonderful career, but when you talk to them after they leave, they are in a blue funk for a while. There is a feeling of "Now what do I do?"

Also very important is that we will be asking the government to give an individual prior to being released from the military and getting training for an occupation in a different field all the opportunities, the financial and human benefits, in order to walk them through that process, because many of these veterans believe, in some cases, that all they can do is work for the military.

● (1725)

That may not happen, but we have to be able to encourage them in a positive way by ensuring that there are benefits to help them get through, educational or occupational benefits or whatever it is, to be able to carry on and move through the next door, as they say, in order to obtain gainful employment and be a productive member of society. That is exactly what we would hope to do through the legislation.

I want to assure the Minister of Veterans Affairs and the parliamentary secretary that we on this side of the House will be supporting the legislation. We hope to be proactive and maybe work on amendments. We will bring witnesses and maybe other departments before the committee to explain exactly how they anticipate accepting the arrival of military and RCMP veterans and ask what they would do in order to enhance the comfort level of welcoming them into the new family they have, to make them feel very proud of what they have done. It needs to be understood that when veterans have injuries, either physical or psychological, it is a serious problem to deal with.

*Private Members' Business*

I look at Senator Roméo Dallaire and what he has done to work through the condition he has suffered over the years. He is a beautiful, classic example of someone who has a very serious psychological concern about what he experienced in Rwanda and elsewhere, and how, with the help of his family, the Liberal Party and others, he was able to manage his concerns and become a very highly respected citizen, not only of this country but of the entire world. He is a shining example of what can happen when one falls on one's knees, gets picked up and is able to move forward, and, as they say in the great province of Newfoundland and Labrador, to bash on. That is what we will be hoping to ensure with the legislation.

Again, I thank the parliamentary secretary, the Minister of Veterans Affairs and my colleague, the Liberal critic, for being here. In fact, I have to say that every single time we have debated a bill on veterans, the minister, regardless of what party, has always sat through the entire debate. On a personal level, I thoroughly enjoy that because it shows that the individual in question cares. Of course, I could go on and talk about all the failures of the Department of Veterans Affairs, but that would take another couple of hours. After winning that award yesterday, I do not think it would diminish my standing in the House of Commons.

At this time, I want to say that at the very end of the day the men and women who serve our country are our true national heroes. They and their families deserve everything we can do to assist them to become gainfully employed in employment that is meaningful and challenges them, so that they wake up in the morning and go to bed at night knowing they have done something that they and their families can be proud of. For that, I am very proud to say that the leader of the federal New Democrats and myself will be supporting the legislation.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** The hon. member for Sackville—Eastern Shore will have seven minutes remaining, should he wish to take it up, when the House next resumes debate on the motion.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

● (1730)

[*Translation*]

### INDIAN ACT AMENDMENT AND REPLACEMENT ACT

The House resumed from November 18 consideration of Bill C-428, An Act to amend the Indian Act (publication of by-laws) and to provide for its replacement, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motions at report stage of Bill C-428 under private member's business.

Call in the members.

● (1810)

[*English*]

*And the bells having rung:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** The question is on Motion No. 2. A vote on this motion also applies to Motion No. 3.

**Mr. David Sweet:** Mr. Speaker, although I stood, my colleagues mentioned that they did not hear my name called. I just want to ensure my vote was recorded.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** I am given to understand that the vote was recorded.

(The House divided on Motion No. 2, which was agreed to on the following division:)

(*Division No. 12*)

### YEAS

#### Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Welland)	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Angus
Armstrong	Ashton
Aspin	Aubin
Ayala	Baird
Bateman	Benoit
Benskin	Bernier
Bevington	Bezan
Blanchette-Lamothe	Blaney
Block	Boivin
Borg	Boughen
Boulerice	Brahmi
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinoogee	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Caron	Carrie
Cash	Charlton
Chicoine	Chisholm
Chisu	Chong
Choquette	Chow
Christopherson	Clarke
Cleary	Clement
Comartin	Côté
Crockatt	Crowder
Cullen	Daniel
Davidson	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dewar
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dreeshen
Dubé	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseault
Dykstra	Fantino
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Flaherty
Fletcher	Freeman
Gallant	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Gill
Glover	Godin
Goguen	Goldring
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Gravelle
Grewal	Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hassainia
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Holder

Hughes	Jacob
James	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kellway	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lapointe
Lauzon	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leef	Leitch
Lemieux	Leslie
Leung	Liu
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Merrifield
Michaud	Miller
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Mulcair
Nash	Nicholls
Nicholson	Norlock
Nunez-Melo	O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
Papillon	Paradis
Payne	Pécelet
Perreault	Pilon
Poillievre	Preston
Quach	Raitt
Rajotte	Rankin
Rathgeber	Raynault
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Saxton
Schellenberger	Scott
Seeback	Sellah
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Sitsabaiesan	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stoffer	Storseth
Strahl	Sullivan
Sweet	Thibeault
Toet	Tremblay
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Turmel
Uppal	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 — 232

## NAYS

### Members

Andrews	Bélanger
Bellavance	Bennett
Byrne	Casey
Cotler	Cuzner
Dion	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Easter	Eyking
Foote	Fortin
Fry	Gameau
Goodale	Hyer
Jones	Karygiannis
Lamoureux	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
MacAulay	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Mourani	Murray
Pacetti	Plamondon
Regan	Scarpaleggia
Sgro	St-Denis
Trudeau	Valeriotte — 36

## Private Members' Business

### PAIRED

Nil

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** I declare Motion No. 2 carried. I also declare Motion No. 3 carried.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River, CPC)** moved that the bill be concurred in.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** In my opinion the yeas have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

● (1820)

[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 13*)

### YEAS

#### Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Benoit	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Crockatt
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Fantino	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Flaherty	Fletcher
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes

*Private Members' Business*

Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Holder
James	Jean
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Leaf
Leitch	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukowski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Merrifield
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
Paradis	Payne
Poillievre	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Saxton
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Toet
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Uppal
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 — 147	

LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	McCallum
McGuinity	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mourani	Mulcair
Murray	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Péclet	Perreault
Pilon	Plamondon
Quach	Rankin
Raynault	Regan
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sellah
Sgro	Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Sitsabaiesan	St-Denis
Stoffer	Sullivan
Thibeault	Tremblay
Trudeau	Turmel
Valeriote — 121	

## PAIRED

Nil

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** I declare the motion carried.

When shall the bill be read a third time? By leave now?

**Mr. Rob Clarke** moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** I see the Chief Government Whip rising on a point of order.

**Hon. John Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, I believe if you seek it you shall find agreement to apply the outcome of this vote to the next vote.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Is it the pleasure of the House to proceed in this fashion?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Nycole Turmel:** Mr. Speaker, the NDP agrees to apply the vote, and we will vote no.

[*English*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** This practice is a little different from when we take the votes by party. The proposition by the chief government whip effectively applies the vote from the last vote at report stage to the vote at third reading, so we will not have to go to each of the whips to verify that. The House adopted that process, so we are good to go.

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

(*Division No. 14*)

## YEAS

## Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Aspin

## NAYS

## Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Aubin	Ayala
Bélangier	Bellavance
Bennett	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Brahmi
Byrne	Caron
Casey	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Chow	Christopherson
Cleary	Comartin
Côté	Cotler
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dewar	Dion
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Dusseault	Easter
Eyking	Foote
Fortin	Freeman
Fry	Garneau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Grogulé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hassainia	Hughes
Hyer	Jacob
Jones	Karygiannis
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)

*Private Members' Business*

Baird  
Benoit  
Bezan  
Block  
Braid  
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)  
Bruinooge  
Calandra  
Cannan  
Carrie  
Chong  
Clement  
Daniel  
Dechert  
Devolin  
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)  
Fantino  
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)  
Flaherty  
Gallant  
Glover  
Goldring  
Gosal  
Grewal  
Hawn  
Hiebert  
Hoback  
James  
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)  
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)  
Kerr  
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)  
Lauzon  
Leitch  
Leung  
Lobb  
Lunney  
MacKenzie  
McColeman  
Menegakis  
Miller  
Moore (Fundy Royal)  
Norlock  
O'Neill Gordon  
Paradis  
Poilievre  
Raitt  
Rathgeber  
Rempel  
Rickford  
Schellenberger  
Shea  
Shory  
Sopuck  
Storseth  
Sweet  
Trost  
Truppe  
Van Kesteren  
Vellacott  
Warawa  
Watson  
Sky Country)  
Weston (Saint John)  
Williamson  
Woodworth  
Young (Oakville)  
Zimmer— 147

Bateman  
Bernier  
Blaney  
Boughen  
Breitkreuz  
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)  
Butt  
Calkins  
Carmichael  
Chisu  
Clarke  
Crockatt  
Davidson  
Del Mastro  
Dreeshen  
Dykstra  
Fast  
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)  
Fletcher  
Gill  
Goguen  
Goodyear  
Gourde  
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)  
Hayes  
Hillyer  
Holder  
Jean  
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)  
Kent  
Komarnicki  
Lake  
Leef  
Lemieux  
Lizon  
Lukiwski  
MacKay (Central Nova)  
Mayer  
McLeod  
Merrifield  
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)  
Nicholson  
O'Connor  
Opitz  
Payne  
Preston  
Rajotte  
Reid  
Richards  
Saxton  
Seeback  
Shipley  
Smith  
Sorenson  
Strahl  
Toet  
Trottier  
Uppal  
Van Loan  
Wallace  
Warkentin  
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to  
Wilks  
Wong  
Yelich  
Young (Vancouver South)

**NAYS**

## Members

Allen (Welland)  
Angus  
Aubin  
Bélanger  
Bennett  
Bevington  
Boivin  
Boulerice  
Byrne  
Casey  
Charlton

Andrews  
Ashton  
Ayala  
Bellavance  
Benskin  
Blanchette-Lamothe  
Borg  
Brahmi  
Caron  
Cash  
Chicoine

Chisholm  
Chow  
Cleary  
Côté  
Crowder  
Cuzner  
Davies (Vancouver East)  
Dewar  
Dionne Labelle  
Doré Lefebvre  
Duncan (Etobicoke North)  
Dusseau  
Eyking  
Fortin  
Fry  
Garrison  
Genest-Jourdain  
Godin  
Gravelle  
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)  
Hassania  
Hyer  
Jones  
Kellway  
Lapointe  
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)  
Liu  
Mai  
Martin  
Mathysen  
McGuinty  
Michaud  
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)  
Mourani  
Murray  
Nicholls  
Pacetti  
Péclat  
Pilon  
Quach  
Raynault  
Rousseau  
Sandhu  
Scott  
Sgro  
Sitsabaiesan  
Stoffer  
Thibeault  
Trudeau  
Valeriote— 121

Choquette  
Christopherson  
Comartin  
Cotler  
Cullen  
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)  
Day  
Dion  
Donnelly  
Dubé  
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)  
Easter  
Foote  
Freeman  
Garneau  
Genest  
Giguère  
Goodale  
Groguhé  
Harris (St. John's East)  
Hughes  
Jacob  
Karygiannis  
Lamoureux  
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)  
Leslie  
MacAulay  
Marston  
Masse  
McCallum  
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)  
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)  
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)  
Mulcair  
Nash  
Nunez-Melo  
Papillon  
Perreault  
Plamondon  
Rankin  
Regan  
Saganash  
Scarpaleggia  
Sella  
Sims (Newton—North Delta)  
St-Denis  
Sullivan  
Tremblay  
Turmel

**PAIRED**

Nil

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the third time and passed)

\* \* \*

● (1825)

**SUPPORTING NON-PARTISAN AGENTS OF PARLIAMENT ACT**

**Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC)** moved that Bill C-520, an act supporting non-partisan agents of Parliament, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is my great honour to rise today, in this House, to speak to my private member's bill, Bill C-520, an act supporting non-partisan agents of Parliament.

*Private Members' Business*

I am certain most would agree that non-partisanship is an essential element of both a professional public administration and a responsible democratic government. A non-partisan public service is one where appointments are based upon merit and free of political influence and where public servants perform their duties and are seen to perform their duties in a politically impartial manner.

Our government values this vital feature of our Westminster style of democratic government, and we are committed to safeguarding the principle of political impartiality of the public service, agents of Parliament and officers of Parliament.

**The Deputy Speaker:** Order, please.

I do not know why we have to do this every single time, but I am trying to hear the member give his speech. I am sure other members in the House would like to hear it as well, and we cannot if members continue with the discussions they are having.

If members do not need to be in the House for this debate or if members do not want to be in the House for this debate, please take discussions outside so we can hear the debate for all parties. Thank you.

**Mr. Mark Adler:** Mr. Speaker, I stand in the House to represent the wishes of my constituents. When I go through the streets of York Centre and knock on doors and listen carefully to their ideas and concerns, what I am hearing on the doorstep is that Canadians want a strong economy, low taxes, safe streets and transparent government. That is what my constituents expect from me and from this Conservative government. That is why I have tabled this bill before us at this time.

I submit that the proposed legislation will supplement and add transparency to the regime governing political activities of public servants. I believe all members of the House will agree that, while non-partisanship is expected of all public servants, agents of Parliament play a particularly vital role in government oversight.

Agents of Parliament such as the Auditor General, the Commissioner of Official Languages and the Information Commissioner are a unique group of independent statutory officers who serve to scrutinize the activity of government.

They report directly to Parliament rather than to government or to an individual minister and so exist to serve Parliament in relation to Parliament's oversight role. This is extremely critical to the balance and fairness of our institutions.

Agents normally produce a report to Parliament to account for their own activities, and their institutional heads are typically appointed through special resolutions of the House of Commons and the Senate.

I submit that, given the close relationship of agents of Parliament and their employees with parliamentarians, it is critical that in carrying out their duties they be independent of any political affiliation.

Moreover, given their high level of political visibility, I believe it is crucial that agents and their staff work in a non-partisan way to maintain the confidence of parliamentarians and Canadians.

The elected officials and members of the House all know the difference between saying something innocuous and accidentally winding up on the front page of *The Globe and Mail*. Here in the House, perhaps more than anywhere else in Canada, words matter.

Words matter in reports as well. That is why neutrality in the office of an agent of Parliament is so critical to ensuring Canadians receive information as clear and as true as they expect.

At every step of the process in preparing a report or dealing with a case, from the selection of what to study, to the research, to the basic wording, neutrality and independence must be maintained. I believe, and I am sure we all would agree here, that this subconsciously would be challenging for former partisans.

Would the opposition trust a report issued out of an office staffed by former professional Conservative partisans? I do not believe so and it is understandable that they might not. The same goes for us on this side of the House. We would be suspicious of a report prepared by NDP partisans.

That is why the bill benefits all parliamentarians and all Canadians. It shines a light on potential conflicts of interest in the preparation of reports. It ensures that neutrality and even-handedness are being respected. It respects the process and ensures that these offices are being operated and populated as intended.

Politics is a tough business. It is like a tug-of-war that never ends. It is important that the referees be above the fray. I believe this is the case currently and would merely like to enshrine this expectation through disclosure.

With that goal in mind, the bill would require every person who applies for a position in the office of an agent of Parliament to make a declaration with respect to past engagement in politically partisan positions.

In particular, this declaration would state whether, in the 10-year period before applying for that position, the person occupied certain specified politically partisan positions.

The bill also prescribes a declaration in the case of persons who work in the office of an agent of Parliament and the agents themselves. Such a declaration would state whether these persons intend to occupy a politically partisan position while continuing to occupy the position of agent of Parliament or work in the office of such an agent.

To promote even more transparency, the declarations would be posted on the website of the office of the relevant agent of Parliament.

● (1830)

In addition, the bill would require an agent of Parliament and the persons who work in his or her office to provide a written undertaking that they will conduct themselves in a non-partisan manner in fulfilling the official duties and responsibilities of their positions. The bill also provides for the examination of alleged partisan conduct. These provisions would provide enhanced transparency and accountability for parliamentarians, who must have confidence that the work of agents of Parliament is impartial.

*Private Members' Business*

As the House knows, accountability and transparency in Canada's public and democratic institutions are the hallmarks of our Conservative government. That was part of our government's promise to Canadians when we were first elected in 2006, and it is why one of the first things we did on coming into power was bring in the Federal Accountability Act and its accompanying action plan. We committed, and we delivered. The act, along with its companion action plan, holds everyone accountable, from the Prime Minister to parliamentarians, from public sector employees to recipients of government funding.

Let me give the House a few examples. We designated deputy ministers accounting officers who must appear before the parliamentary committees to be accountable for the management of their departments. We did this for the simple reason that organizations paid for with public money should be open to public scrutiny.

We also introduced measures to strengthen ethical conduct in the public service. Through the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act, we empowered public service employees and Canadians to honestly and openly report government wrongdoing without fear of reprisal. We brought in reforms to the Lobbying Act and its regulations to respond to Canadians' desire for more transparency and ethical behaviour in lobbying activities. We also brought into force the Conflict of Interest Act and named a conflict of interest and ethics commissioner so that Canadians would have the opportunity to voice their concerns about unethical behaviour in government and hold violators accountable. To help give these accountability measures teeth, we introduced new criminal penalties and sanctions for anyone who commits fraud against the Crown.

Canadians also told us loud and clear that they wanted a government that is more open and transparent.

As former U.S. Supreme Justice Louis Brandeis once said, sunlight is the best disinfectant. Indeed, the Federal Accountability Act delivered, shining a light on the operations of the government. It has given Canadians broader and better access to more information from public organizations than ever before. It has extended the Access to Information Act to cover the Canadian Wheat Board, five foundations, five agents of Parliament and most crown corporations and their wholly owned subsidiaries.

The reforms contained in this act are in a direct line of descent from the political reforms that first brought responsible government to this country. We can show that our changes in governance are working.

Let us take a look at access to information, an area where the government is setting records here in Canada. In 2012, the Conservative government released a record number of materials through access to information requests. Six million pages were released to the public last year. That is not all. The number of requests processed increased by 27%. That is 10,000 more requests over the previous year, which set a new record.

One could be forgiven for thinking that these record numbers would have bogged the government down or slowed down turnaround times. I am happy to say that they did not. In fact, this year, the government had one of its fastest turnaround rates on

record. More requests were filled and more materials were released, and it was all done more quickly and efficiently.

When Canadians say that they want openness and accountability, they expect results. These numbers do not lie. Thanks to this Conservative government, Canadians are getting more, better, and faster access than ever before. That is just one concrete example of how the government is delivering on its promises to Canadians and just one example of how the accountability act has opened up the doors of government to the public.

The bill I bring before the House today continues our efforts to make our system of government even better. Our government fully supports the bill's intent to augment and supplement the existing regime in ensuring that agents of Parliament and their employees do not engage in political activities that conflict or are seen to conflict with their official duties and conduct. I look forward to its examination in committee to further discuss its effectiveness and its relationship to the tools already in place to protect the impartiality of the public service.

• (1835)

I encourage all members of the House to support this bill. I hope my colleagues across the aisle see this as a way of protecting all of our rights as parliamentarians and as a means of ensuring that Canadians get the most fair and unbiased information possible, as they expect. I believe that we can all agree that this is an important step in ensuring transparency and accountability in the House.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from York Centre for his remarks. I admit that had I not known his political affiliation, I probably would have shed a tear.

However, once you know the context, it is practically absurd. When the government says that more pages have been made public under the Access to Information Act, it is probably because this government is the most secretive government ever and this is the only way to get even a shred of information.

I would like to ask the hon. member a question about his very specific bill. I think that transparency should be a two-way street.

How is it that his bill allows any senator's office to request an investigation into an agent of Parliament, while agents of Parliament cannot request the same kind of investigation into the Senate?

[*English*]

**Mr. Mark Adler:** Mr. Speaker, if the member feels like crying, I would encourage him to go ahead and do so, because this bill is clear in its intent. This bill would bring more transparency and accountability to all agents of Parliament. I would think that members of the opposition would be just as interested in it as we are.

*Private Members' Business*

We hope that Canadians will see that all the agents of Parliament, and those who work in the offices of the agents of Parliament, are above partisan politics and that our professional civil servants are dedicated to their jobs and not to their political parties and activities. I would hope that the member who asked the question would be on board with that. In the event that he is not, he should just go ahead and shed tears.

**Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the hon. member thumped the chest of government about the Federal Accountability Act and transparency through the Ethics Commissioner and the Lobbying Commissioner and how these are all great pieces of legislation they brought forward. However, time and time again, we see Conservative after Conservative breaking these laws and being written up by the Ethics Commissioner and the Lobbying Commissioner. What punishment is there? There is a slap on the wrist, and Conservatives carry on doing business as normal.

If they are serious about making changes, would they not want to put some teeth in the legislation so that when Conservatives break these laws, there is actually a fine in place?

• (1840)

**Mr. Mark Adler:** Mr. Speaker, coming from a Liberal, that is the kettle calling the pot black. There was a government, before 2006, that passed around brown envelopes that were not very transparent at all. There a number of former leadership candidates who owe hundreds of thousands of dollars and refuse to pay it back. They have walked away from their debts not only to themselves but to the Canadian people. It is an absolute outrage.

This bill would bring transparency and accountability to the public administration, and I would hope that every member of the House who has some integrity would be behind it.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this is my opportunity to add to my remarks and perhaps to answer some of the questions from the hon. member for York Centre.

The title of Bill C-520 is “An Act supporting non-partisan agents of Parliament”. The short title I would have given it is “An Act avoiding the real issue”.

The system of democracy is based on a number of mechanisms that guarantee its legitimacy: the right to vote, the right to be elected, the right to be represented, the division of powers, accountability—of course—transparency, and so on. I will take a few minutes to explore some of these elements in more depth.

It goes without saying that, in a modern democracy, representatives, elected officials, parliamentarians as a whole, derive their legitimacy from an election. Election by universal suffrage is one of the basic principles of democracy. The Conservative government today is the government of Canada because our electoral system gave it a majority of votes, even though that majority was by no means the same as the majority of the votes cast by Canadians. Do I need to remind the House that this majority government was elected with 39% of the popular vote? Voter turnout was right around 60%. We are a long way from a full voter turnout. However, that is the way our political system works. The right to govern is based on an election.

Without any doubt, people are also aware that our parliamentary system has a long historical tradition and that some significant anachronisms remain. The most significant of them will probably be solved in 2015, when the New Democrats come to power. Canada is one of the last democratic countries in the world to have a chamber of its Parliament made up of unelected people. I refer, of course, to the Senate. As I was looking through the parliamentary website, I came upon a definition that I really want to quote:

In a democratic country, all eligible citizens have the right to participate, either directly or indirectly, in making the decisions that affect them. Canadian citizens normally elect someone to represent them in making decisions at the different levels of government. This is called a representative democracy. Countries like Canada, the United States of America and the United Kingdom all have representative democracies.

Let us look at this definition of democracy as it relates to the Senate. In Canada, some representatives make decisions without being elected by the people. It looks like we must either tailor the definition of democracy to the reality of Canada or remove it from our own website.

The other pillar of democracy is the power to hold any institution accountable. The Senate scandal would have remained hidden from Canadians if not for the mechanisms of accountability, oversight and transparency. Despite this, we are unfortunately still far from knowing the sad truth about this affair.

In this context, Bill C-520, An Act supporting non-partisan agents of Parliament is apparently intended to mitigate partisanship in Parliament and enhance government transparency. That is a good plan. It is true that on this second point, something has to be done. After all, this is the same government that repeatedly relies on gag orders—there were over 50 of them during the last session—often stays silent during debates in the House, conducts far too many committee meetings in camera and uses omnibus bills to bury even deeper everything that Canadians are entitled to know. The Conservatives are trying to tell us about transparency. I am certainly willing to talk about it, but as we often say back home, it would be nice if they could walk the talk.

In our Parliament there are people we sometimes call “officers of Parliament”. We know them well and greatly appreciate the work they do. I am referring to such people as the Auditor General, the Chief Electoral Officer, the Commissioner of Official Languages and the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. These people take on responsibilities to serve Parliament, and they report to Parliament. It is obviously necessary to preserve their independence from the government in power, so they can assume the responsibilities conferred on them under the law.

The bill introduced by the Conservatives is somewhat underhanded in that it suggests that these agents of Parliament are not really impartial and calls for increased transparency in how they do their work.

• (1845)

Bill C-520 claims that its purpose is to avoid conflicts that are likely to arise or be perceived to arise between partisan activities and the official duties and responsibilities of agents of Parliament or their staff.



*Private Members' Business*

The bill also requires agents of Parliament and anyone who applies for a position in the office of an agent of Parliament to declare any politically partisan positions they held in the previous 10 years—as though people are not allowed to have a life before Parliament—and any politically partisan positions they currently hold or intend to hold in the future. The government seems less strict or less demanding when it comes to former Conservative MPs who resign, decide to change careers and then return as consultants for their friends. No matter.

What exactly constitutes a politically partisan position? For the Conservatives, it means being an electoral candidate, an electoral district association officer, a member of a ministerial staff, a member of the House of Commons, a member of a parliamentary staff, or a member of a political staff.

Once again, the bill's main goal seems commendable, but in reality the bill is very dangerous to our democracy. First, we are concerned that such a bill would discourage many candidates who have expressed their opinions publicly or actively participated in our democracy over the course of their lives. Ten years is a long time.

This bill could also be seen as an attempt to intimidate agents of Parliament.

The bill goes off the rails when it indicates that any senator or MP can ask that an agent of Parliament investigate the partisan activities of his or her staff.

I must say that, personally, I am not a big fan of this way of doing things, which could be compared to a witch hunt. We have seen other examples of this. There has been an increasing number of witch hunts.

Need I remind hon. members of the case of Ms. Therrien, who lost her job as a result of a witch hunt when she put the public good or the good of all Canadians ahead of political partisanship? She is still paying a high price for her actions today. Since she was dismissed, she is not eligible for employment insurance. As a result, she has only the solidarity and generosity of Canadians to help her through this difficult time when she is looking for a new job and needs support. That is just one example.

We live in a country where everyone can express their political opinions without fear that their careers will be affected, especially in the public service or in our Parliament, as long as their political opinions do not affect or influence the work those agents or public servants are supposed to do.

Part 7 of the Public Service Employment Act already allows public servants to engage in political activities as long as those activities do not affect or appear to affect their ability to fulfill their duties in a politically impartial fashion. That is already covered.

The Values and Ethics Code for the Public Service also broadly states that public servants must carry out their duties in a non-partisan and impartial manner. With the exception of unfounded politically motivated witch hunts, there have never been any proven incidents of partisan activities or apparent conflicts in those offices. As I was saying, the activities of those offices are already regulated by the Public Service Employment Act, the Political Activities Regulations and the Values and Ethics Code for the Public Service.

Mr. Speaker, you are telling me that I have one minute left. If I did not believe you were fully impartial, I would say that time is running out faster for me than for others, but I believe you.

In short, there are three measures that already guarantee the impartiality of the agents of Parliament whose work we greatly appreciate. At the same time, no incident has been reported. As a result, we cannot help but ask: what is the point of this bill?

In conclusion, let me say that the Conservatives' idea of accountability consists of making Canadians forget the government's repeated lack of parliamentary accountability by irrationally attacking and intimidating the parliamentary watchdogs whose job is to hold the government accountable.

I could also tell you about Mr. Page, but I know I do not have time.

● (1850)

Bill C-520 is just another example of the political cynicism of the Conservatives, who are attacking Parliament's oversight mechanisms for a problem that has never been proven to exist, while protecting and hiding the corruption of their own members—in the Senate, for example.

[*English*]

**Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in this place we get to do private member's bills because of a cause or something we truly believe in. However, this legislation is a solution looking for a problem.

There is no problem with our officers of Parliament being non-partisan. They all do their jobs very well. This legislation, which tries to make our officers of Parliament non-partisan, is sort of like a red herring.

Let us take a look at the individuals in question.

We are talking about only eight individuals who are officers of Parliament who are normally chosen by the government in consultation with all the parties. Usually these officers of Parliament have a fairly good vetting process through the political environment. These individuals are the Auditor General, the Chief Electoral Officer, the Commissioner of Official Languages, the Privacy Commissioner, the Information Commissioner, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, the Commissioner of Lobbying and the Public Sector Integrity Commissioner.

These individuals do not need to sign a waiver to say that they have not been partisan and that they will not be partisan. This is something that one goes through during the job interview.

Do members not feel we need to find the people who are best suited for these jobs regardless of their political affiliation? Just because they might be a Conservative, or a New Democrat or Liberal does it automatically make them bad people and they cannot do the job?

Let us look at the government's choice in the Auditor General. One of the most fundamental things in our hiring system is that we hire someone who is bilingual. That sort of got left out when the government hired our current Auditor General.

*Private Members' Business*

We really need to look at the individuals who are seeking these jobs and not base it on some party political affiliation that would deem them inappropriate. We want the best people in these jobs and this bill would certainly limit that.

Talking about partisanship and political appointments, if the government were serious in cracking down on partisan and political appointments, why does it not look at some of the 1,157 people it has appointed in six short years from partisan activities to the Canada Pension Review Tribunal, to the Toronto Port Authority, to the Canada School of Energy and Environment, to the Immigration and Refugee Board and to the Employment Insurance Boards of Referees? It goes on and on.

I could sit here and list hundreds upon hundreds of donors, Conservative bagmen sitting on riding associations, supporters, former Conservative cabinet ministers and former staff to different premiers. I could go on and on. Therefore, if the Conservatives are truly serious about cutting out partisanship, why do they not look at themselves and some of the appointments they have made as a government and not look at our agents of Parliament?

The bill is a little misguided. It is a bit of a red herring in this debate and it is trying to cast aspersions on some fine agents of our Parliament. It really misses the mark where the patronage trough begins and it begins with the government and some of the over 1,100 appointments that it has made to different appeals, tribunals and boards in government.

If the Conservatives really want to look at cutting out partisanship, they should look at themselves first rather than try to bring in some phoney legislation that would come to our officers of Parliament, who are all people who go through an enormous vetting process.

I am sure in the vetting process for our Chief Electoral Officer, we would look at what he has done in the last 10 years. For many people who apply for these positions, we would look at their resume in the last 10 years. Therefore, the legislation really does nothing. It only tries to claim some transparency and that Conservatives are all of a sudden concerned about partisanship when deep down they have done that over 1,100 times in the short six years they have been in government.

When we come to private member's bills, we should look at something that could really make a difference rather than some bill that would prop up the government to say how great it is doing things. This legislation is totally misguided.

• (1855)

**Mr. Dan Albas (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am quite happy to be here tonight. That kind of talk is why I am here tonight. I am very pleased to have this opportunity to provide the government's response to Bill C-520, An Act supporting non-partisan agents of Parliament.

Our government is committed to the principle of political impartiality of the public service, agents of Parliament and officers of Parliament. This principle is a fundamental element of our system of government and ensures that Canadians and parliamentarians benefit from the non-partisan delivery of services.

The bill before us would supplement and add transparency to the existing regime governing political activities, which is why our government is pleased to support it.

I do not believe it is a secret to anyone in this place that partisanship is alive and well in this chamber, no different than any provincial legislature or local governments and elsewhere. The interesting thing about partisanship is how often it is one side that accuses the other, while overlooking that it takes two or more to tango.

I would submit that partisanship, overall, is on the rise. We now have groups and organizations that exist, in some cases, solely for partisan purposes. I will not name names, as we also know that some of the most partisan groups claim to be non-partisan, and that is what brings me back to the importance of the bill.

For this place to function for government, for opposition, for elected officials and, most important, for Canadians, we need to maintain and enhance a professional non-partisan public service.

I have a great respect for all members of the House who I am certain join our government in recognizing that non-partisanship is what makes responsible, democratic government work. An impartial public administration ensures that Canadians, regardless of their views, receive fair and objective treatment from government officials. The work that our public service performs on behalf of Canadians is important, from border guards to food inspectors and from public health specialists to safety investigators.

One of the many benefits of non-partisanship is that public servants are selected based upon qualification, merit and expertise, as opposed to political affiliation. That is why the Values and Ethics Code and the provisions of the Public Service Employment Act protect the impartiality of the public service and, specifically, agents of Parliament. Clearly, the principle of non-partisanship is not to be taken lightly.

In fact, it is essential to the success of the public service that this reputation and tradition of impartiality should be maintained in the eyes of both the public and parliamentarians, which is why the bill has come forward at an opportune time.

In budget 2013, our government committed to review and update public service processes and systems to ensure the public service would continue to serve Canadians well.

This bill is consistent with that commitment. It recognizes that while non-partisanship is expected of all public servants, agents of Parliament play a particularly important role in government oversight. Agents of Parliament carry out duties assigned by statute and report to one or both of the Senate and the House of Commons. The individuals appointed to these offices perform work on behalf of Parliament and report to those chambers, usually, through the Speakers.

Given the close relationship of agents of Parliaments and their employees with parliamentarians, their independence from political affiliation in carrying out their duties is essential.

*Private Members' Business*

Furthermore, given that much of this work is political and, by extension, partisan in nature, it is vital that agents and their staff work in non-partisan ways to maintain the confidence of parliamentarians and Canadians. To that end, the bill would require that every person who applied for a position in the office of an agent of Parliament to make a declaration with respect to past engagement in politically partisan positions.

● (1900)

Specifically, this declaration would state whether, in the 10 years before applying for that position, the person occupied certain specified politically partisan positions. Now in the case of persons who work in the office of an agent of Parliament and the agents themselves, a declaration would state whether or not they intend to occupy a politically partisan position while continuing to occupy the position of agent of Parliament or work in the office of such an agent.

The declarations would then be posted on the website of the office of the relevant agent of Parliament. As well, the bill would require the agent of Parliament and the persons who work in his or her office to provide a written undertaking that they will conduct themselves in a non-partisan manner in fulfilling the official duties and responsibilities of that position.

The bill also provides the examination of alleged partisan conduct. These provisions provide enhanced transparency and accountability for parliamentarians who must have the confidence that the work of the agents of Parliament are impartial. I believe, as members, we have an obligation to support the principle that agents of Parliament and their employees should not engage in political activities that conflict or may be seen to conflict with their official duties.

Our government supports the intent of the bill and looks forward to its examination at committee to ensure that nothing in this bill will diminish the effectiveness of the tools that are already in place to protect the impartiality of the public service.

Before I close, I would like to add one more comment on why I personally support this particular bill. We know that 83% of Canadians now actively use the Internet. In fact, in my home province of British Columbia that number is now 87%. We also know that the Internet has been available to Canadians for around 20 years.

I mention this because never before in our history has so much personal information been available to the general public online. I know I am not alone in pointing out that all governments struggle to keep pace with this technology. Bill C-520 creates an opportunity for public servants to make full and open disclosure on any previous political events they may or may not have been involved with. Given that many of these events can be found online and by extension potentially misunderstood online, I see Bill C-520 as creating an opportunity for increased transparency and proactive disclosure.

This can then help resolve potential conflicts and misunderstandings and will help ensure Canada has a non-partisan civil service that we all can be confident in. I encourage all members of the House to support this important legislation, which augments the principle of non-partisanship in our system of government.

● (1905)

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I feel that this bill is a real witch hunt. I am pleased to at least be able to speak to the bill.

This witch hunt is unfounded, and the Conservatives are using it for purely political purposes. First of all, there have never been any reports of incidents or actual or apparent conflict in these offices. I would like to add that political activities of public servants are already strictly regulated under part 7 of the Public Service Employment Act, the Political Activities Regulations and the Values and Ethics Code for the Public Sector. The only two offices not covered by those measures are the Senate Ethics Officer and the Ethics Commissioner. That is because they have their own very strict internal code, because they work in the area of ethics.

The first thing that jumps out at me from this bill is that it applies to agents of Parliament. It also applies to anyone who might want to work in their office ones day. For example, it applies to the Auditor General as well as the person in charge of answering the telephone and saying that you have reached the Office of the Auditor General of Canada.

This is in no way related to how important the desired position is. It is black and white; it applies to everyone. Some people are already subject to strict codes, like translators, who are required to keep their work confidential. It makes absolutely no sense. The Conservatives are looking for problems where there are none. What is even more hypocritical is that they are saying that the problem involves everyone working in the offices of agents of Parliament, when we know that this has never been an issue.

The government is doing this, yet it appointed I do not know how many defeated candidates to nearly all the positions it was able to fill. Every time a position opened up, the government found a partisan candidate who had donated to the Conservative Party or a defeated candidate to fill it.

I find that particularly hypocritical. The Conservatives need to acknowledge that they sometimes went too far in making partisan appointments and that they may not have made the best appointments. For example, Mr. Duffy, Ms. Wallin and Mr. Brazeau were appointed to the Senate. Well done. Talk about putting the right person in the right place.

I think we can all see that the government's judgment is completely disastrous. Perhaps it could admit that it has a problem and it should work toward having less partisan candidates in positions of some importance. I think the position of senator is a fairly important one in Canada. Instead of thinking about itself, looking inward and saying that it could maybe do something intelligent, the government is saying that the problem is the receptionist who works in the agent of Parliament's office, or perhaps even the person who cleans the office. It makes no sense, frankly. No distinction is made and everyone is lumped together.

*Private Members' Business*

Moreover, the government does not distinguish between politics, politicians and policy-makers. It seems to me that these concepts are crucial, because they imply different levels of involvement. Generally speaking, we also know that Canadians' apathy toward politics is at an all-time high. Close to 40% of Canadians do not vote. I think citizen involvement should be more highly regarded.

I think it is normal that people who have already been involved in political activities should be interested in the political system and should want to work in that area because they have had a similar job. However, the Conservatives make no distinction with respect to regions, either. In my region, some municipalities have only about 150 voters. On average, one person in 25 in the town could be a councillor or the mayor. Now, all that has to be declared. It is crazy. It is important to note that all that needs to be disclosed.

● (1910)

Everything has to be posted on the website. Therefore the names of all employees in these positions, with their statements, have to be posted regardless of what they do. This makes absolutely no sense.

There is something else that makes no sense and has to be discussed. Indeed, any member of Parliament or senator can ask an agent of Parliament to inquire into the partisan activities of his or her staff members.

For example, if a person is unhappy with someone else for any reason, that person can ask for an investigation of that someone else. Agents of Parliament will therefore be conducting investigations. I hope there will not be too many of them, but with the Conservatives, you never know.

Agents of Parliament have a specific job to do. We all agree that the Commissioner of Official Languages, for example, is over-worked because of all the cuts and mismanagement of the Conservative government. Therefore what will he be doing? He will not be doing his job, as he will be busy investigating certain employees who may or may not be engaging in partisan activities.

Neither members nor Conservatives are even required to make a valid complaint. They can file a complaint without having any idea of whether it is valid or not. There will be no consequences. Whenever people have any doubts about employees, they will simply make a complaint and an agent of Parliament will investigate these employees instead of doing his or her job.

Worse, any member of Parliament or senator may request an investigation, but agents of Parliament will not be able to investigate the activities of the Senate. The Senate may ask for an investigation of agents of Parliament, but agents of Parliament will not be able to investigate senators. They will have to obtain a special warrant. Not even the Auditor General can decide on his own to investigate certain senators.

Of course, we do not know of any senators with strange spending habits, do we? No, we have never heard of such a thing. None of this makes any sense, especially given the huge scandal in the Senate right now.

It is clear that senators could ask for investigations into agents of Parliament, but agents of Parliament could not investigate senators.

However, it is quite obvious that the Senate warrants far more investigation than the agents of Parliament.

This really is a bill that is totally useless. It is a witch hunt that shows a total lack of respect for the public service.

I think the bill tells Canadians to avoid getting involved in any way, because if they do, they will never be able to get a job with the government, which will shut them out. It makes absolutely no sense.

This can happen at all levels. This can include people who were involved in partisan activities not only at the federal level, but also at the provincial or municipal level. I do not know if this will also apply to people who work for a union. This is really just a witch hunt that shows contempt for workers in general.

What is even more ironic is that the Conservatives are doing this while refusing to look in the mirror and failing to realize that the partisanship problem is not among the staff of our agents of Parliament, but rather in this government. The problem is within the Conservative Party and the Prime Minister's Office. The Conservatives refuse to see that.

That is why I find it completely hypocritical of them to introduce a bill like this, when for months the Conservatives have been refusing to take any action within their own government. I find that completely hypocritical. I think this shows a complete lack of respect for all the people who work hard for the public service and within the offices of our agents of Parliament.

The Conservatives are showing just how utterly incapable they are of respecting a job well done. They are incapable of respecting people who really want to improve our Parliament and our country, like the staff at the office of the Commissioner of Official Languages who are fighting so that francophones like me can continue to enjoy the progress we have made. The government is laughing in their faces. This makes absolutely no sense.

I urge all members to vote against this bill.

● (1915)

**Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the bill appears to be designed to avoid conflicts of interest. The government claims that it wants to protect democracy, but senators are not even elected. They are not accountable to the public.

These same people will have the right to look into someone's party affiliation. If someone is chosen to work on a file because he is an objective professional, why is who he votes for in an election a problem? Every citizen is afforded that freedom. This is a democracy, and making political choices is part of our lives.

Last year, the Auditor General did an excellent job and had some criticism for the current government, which was not acting appropriately. This public official wanted to shed some light on the situation, which enabled the official opposition to inform the public that things were not working as they were supposed to.

Now senators can scrutinize those officials if they do not like or are bothered by their work. Those officials were selected to fill their position based on their ability to achieve certain objectives. However, since they are inconveniencing the senators, the latter can decide to harm them, scare them and silence them. That is not good for democracy.

I support any bill that requires us to be more transparent. What I want is a bill that requires the government to tell the truth to the opposition and to Canadians. That is what democracy is about and that is what I stand for.

When we allow a body like the Senate to investigate public officials, that is troubling. Senators are not even elected and are not accountable.

In our system, we already have laws governing these professionals. What, then, is the real purpose of this bill? Let us look at that for a moment. What is the government really trying to do? I think they want to appear to be transparent by demonstrating that they are capable of controlling their officials. Instead they should demonstrate greater transparency by telling the truth and admitting when they make mistakes. That would be better for democracy, instead of coming up with excuses to justify using taxpayers' money. I am referring to one senator in particular who I will not name because everyone knows who I am talking about.

That is what we have to focus on. As elected representatives, we are all accountable and we must respect our commitment to the public. If these officials are doing good work, then why interfere? They can choose to vote for the NDP, the Liberal Party or the Conservative Party. What does it matter if the person has a political past? They are citizens like the rest of us. This is very touchy. These people help us to be more transparent. It is up to each and every one of us to be accountable.

Appointed senators are not accountable to anyone and that poses a threat to democracy. Using taxpayers' money inappropriately is another threat. Transparency must come from each one of us regardless of whether we are part of the opposition or the government.

I do not like the fact that workers are being frightened and told that if they do not do what the government wants, they will be questioned. That brings back bad memories. I come from Chile, a country that was not at all democratic when I was young. In a truly democratic country, people have freedom of expression and we can verify what they say.

We must not undermine democracy. We must not attack public servants who are doing a good job. We must instead go after those who are not doing a good job. We must go after senators who are not doing a good job and who were not even elected. We should investigate those who are in the wrong.

• (1920)

I am truly worried. If the Conservative government really wanted to shed light on its current problems, it would talk openly about them. That would help all of us get through these difficult times.

Bills like this one force us to talk about things that are not even necessary. That is why we are saying that this is a cynical attempt by

### *Private Members' Business*

the government to undermine the credibility of this office couched in the language of transparency. First of all, all of us in this place should be transparent.

I believe that instead of attacking these officials, we should take a look at ourselves, be honest and speak out. If we have made mistakes, we need to acknowledge them. It will be good for democracy. Those who have done wrong will not be elected the next time.

Unfortunately, that does not apply to senators because they are appointed. That is why we want to abolish the Senate. It does not meet the needs of a democratic country. I believe that we should focus on being transparent in our day-to-day work.

[English]

**The Deputy Speaker:** Resuming debate, the hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. I would advise the member that he will have about three and a half minutes before the time expires.

**Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, that is not a lot of time, but I am pleased to have the opportunity nonetheless to rise and speak for a few moments on this bill.

It is a bill that I am a bit perplexed to find here on the floor. While we certainly support private members' bills coming forward, the government tends to slide its own business through as either government-sponsored bills or through private members' bills, so we never really know what the motivation is behind it.

Let me speak to this. Bill C-520, an act supporting non-partisan agents of Parliament, talks about the people who should staff and represent the agents of Parliament. It does not talk about the fact that many of the agents of Parliament need proper resources to carry out their responsibilities under their particular mandate. They have come to committees and reported to the House that they would be in a better position to properly carry out their responsibilities and mandate if they were allocated greater resources and if they had their mandate properly amended to allow them to carry out their responsibilities.

That would be a very positive and constructive piece of legislation and something that we could probably support. However, I do not quite understand why this is here. It talks about the partisan activities of people who work for parliamentary agents, but we already have legislation and regulations that deal with the partisan activities of public servants. We have Part 7 of the Public Service Employment Act, political activities regulations, and the Values and Ethics Code for the Public Service. The only two offices not covered by these pieces of legislation and regulation are the Senate Ethics Officer and the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. They have their own in-house codes.

I do not understand why this is here. I have to tell the House that as somebody who has been in politics as an elected member for over 15 years and who has been involved in partisan activities, I encourage and applaud citizens who get engaged in the political process. It shows a commitment to their communities and their country. That is a good thing, and it is something that we should encourage.

*Government Orders*

We should not use it as a detriment. Somebody should be hired or appointed based on the skills, credentials, and experience that they bring to the job; it is not based on their partisan activities. Likewise, I would say that their partisan activities should not be a detriment to their ability to qualify for that position.

I see you are indicating that my time has drawn to an end, Mr. Speaker. I will hopefully get an opportunity to rise and continue this, but I encourage members not to support this bill and not to support the attack by the government on public servants.

• (1925)

**The Deputy Speaker:** The member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour will have approximately 6 minutes and 15 seconds if he wishes to resume his speech at the time this matter comes back for further debate.

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.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

### CRISIS IN THE PHILIPPINES

(House in committee of the whole on Government Business No. 4, Mr. Joe Comartin in the chair)

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

That this Committee take note of the crisis in the Philippines.

**The Chair:** Before we begin this evening's debate, I would like to remind hon. members of how the proceedings will unfold.

Each member speaking will be allotted 10 minutes for debate followed by 10 minutes for questions and comments.

[*Translation*]

The debate will end after four hours or when no member rises to speak.

Pursuant to the order made on Tuesday, November 19, 2013, the Chair will receive no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent.

[*English*]

We will now begin tonight's take note debate.

**Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of International Development and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I will be splitting my time with the member for Niagara Falls, the Minister of National Defence.

Thank you for the opportunity to update the House and discuss the situation in the Philippines.

[*Translation*]

Like everyone here, I am stunned by the extent of the damage and the tragic loss of human life.

Our thoughts and prayers are with all of those affected by this crisis. This recent tragedy serves as an important reminder that our international aid is a tangible expression of Canada's most noble values. Canada is a compassionate society, and we are ready and willing to do more to help those affected cope with this terrible crisis.

[*English*]

Canada has been closely monitoring the situation since before the storm hit. We provided funds to help with preparations before it made landfall. Twenty-four hours after Haiyan hit, we made an initial contribution of \$5 million to address immediate needs. This was followed by the launch of the relief fund through which our government will match eligible donations by individual donors dollar for dollar. Just this week the Prime Minister announced \$15 million as part of that fund. Canada is the fourth-largest donor so far for the Philippines.

• (1930)

[*Translation*]

Even before the typhoon hit, Canada was involved, providing funds to help with preparations. Twenty-four hours after Haiyan made landfall, we made an initial contribution of \$5 million to address immediate needs.

That was followed by the launch of the Typhoon Haiyan relief fund. For every eligible dollar donated by Canadians, the government will contribute one additional dollar, effectively doubling donations.

In addition, this week the Prime Minister announced an additional \$15 million as part of the relief fund.

[*English*]

We know Canadians are incredibly compassionate. The most recent numbers from our partners show that they have received nearly \$20 million from Canadians in donations.

Canada will continue to play a leadership role in the relief efforts under way in the Philippines. We will continue to be there for those Canadians who are worried about their loved ones.

Just this morning, I announced in Mississauga that we were deploying our emergency stockpile of relief supplies. I commend the efforts of Médecins Sans Frontières, Save the Children Canada, and CARE Canada for the work that they will be doing on the ground very soon, since the plane is leaving as we speak.

We are sending tents, blankets, water purification tablets, shelter kits, and other emergency supplies to the hardest-hit regions. These items will help to meet the basic needs of a minimum of 5,000 families, or 25,000 people, for three months.

Canada and the Red Cross Society also deployed the emergency field hospital and a 12-person medical team to provide urgently needed emergency health support.

[*Translation*]

Canada has provided more than \$20 million to support relief efforts for those affected by the typhoon.

*Government Orders*

Our humanitarian partners are using these funds to provide emergency shelter, food, water, sanitation services, health support, security services and other essential services.

Our government will continue to be there for members of Canada's Filipino community who are desperately awaiting news of their loved ones.

In particular, we will offer our support to those who have received bad news. I would like to point out that Canada is the fourth-largest donor so far in response to the situation in the Philippines.

The message we want to send to our Filipino friends is that all of Canada is by their side. I would ask Canadians to continue to give generously. Our government will continue to match eligible donations through the Typhoon Haiyan relief fund, which was announced in recent days.

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I want to thank the government for its response to this horrific typhoon. In this country and in this place when we see disasters happen, be they in Haiti or in the Philippines, it is a time for us to work together to help the people who need it. I really want to convey that spirit in the debate tonight, in how we present our concerns, so that we have a respectful debate and be sure to remind ourselves that it is about the people of the Philippines. I want to say that at the start.

I want to ask the minister a question on the breakdown of the \$20 million in contributions. There are, for instance, \$4 million to the UN World Food Programme, UNICEF \$3 million, the Red Cross \$2 million and the International Organization for Migration \$2 million. Could the minister give us an understanding of how these amounts were arrived at and what input he had in coming up with these donations to the various organizations?

**Hon. Christian Paradis:** Mr. Chair, it is very important to act as soon as we can. I can first tell the House that the organizations are working on the ground as we speak, and the way to deploy the money is to make sure we can access the people and reach as many as we can, according to what is being done on the ground. As we know, the ISST team was there from the outset and the disaster assistance relief team was there after that, all according to the request from the Filipino government.

After that, we have to evaluate within the department who does what. I guess the main priority is to make sure we are there as soon as possible to reach people in distress, to make sure that we have access and that people in need are reached as soon as possible so their needs are addressed. This is what we are doing in terms of deployment, to make sure it goes where it has to go as soon as possible.

• (1935)

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I would like to reiterate my colleague's comments. We are here for the people of the Philippines. We keep them in our thoughts and prayers.

I am wondering if the minister could clarify what exactly the government's commitment is. Last week, we know the government pledged \$5 million and the minister promised to match Canadians' contributions, and we thank him for that. We know that is at about \$20 million now from Canadians.

I am wondering if he can clarify. On Monday, the Prime Minister made an announcement of an additional \$15 million, but it does not look as if that was new money. Has the government given \$5 million and Canadians \$15 million, with the promise that the government will match that?

**Hon. Christian Paradis:** Mr. Chair, first we provided \$30,000 to the Red Cross in terms of a mitigation process before the typhoon had its landfall. After that, we announced \$5 million for addressing urgent needs. Then we announced the matching relief fund, so each dollar given by Canadians will be matched with dollars coming from the government.

That being said, the Prime Minister announced \$15 million, and this is part of the matching fund. The idea of announcing it now is to ensure that the organizations on the ground have access to the money because they have to work now. We know now that Canadians gave almost \$20 million, so more dollars will have to be matched. This morning, I announced in Mississauga \$5 million in terms of stockpiling to ensure we provide medical tools, blankets, tents and tarps, and now the plane is about to leave.

What we have to bear in mind very clearly is that we will continue to assess the situation very closely, and we will address the needs. We are all open to continuing to help our Filipino friends. We will be there to help.

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I am very pleased to participate in this very important debate that will discuss Canada's response to Typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines.

I would like to start by reiterating this government's sympathies to all those who have lost loved ones as a result of the typhoon. They should know that our thoughts and prayers remain with the millions of people who have been affected by this devastation.

On Friday, November 8, like all Canadians and indeed people around the world, I reacted with horror when we learned the news that a devastating storm had hit the Philippines. Thousands were feared dead, and homes and infrastructure were destroyed, leaving people without shelter, communications or even the basic survival needs like food and water.

Canadians are a caring and generous people. Indeed, there are no more caring or generous people in the world than the people of Canada. The news of this devastation, not unexpectedly, sparked a strong desire in Canadians to help. As a responsible citizen of the world, Canada has a duty to help, and help we do. We offer assistance when such disasters strike.

*Government Orders*

I am proud to say that our response was quick and it was decisive. Canada's approach to helping the Philippines is a comprehensive whole-of-government effort led by the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development. It is working hand in hand with core departments and agencies, including National Defence, the Canadian Armed Forces, and Citizenship and Immigration Canada, to deliver support.

As my colleague has indicated, and as members will hear this evening, we deployed a forward party of Canada's disaster assistance response team, the DART, to the region and deployed other elements of the DART capability soon afterwards. DART is Canada's complement of military personnel and assets, ready at a moment's notice to deploy for exactly this sort of emergency. They have unique knowledge and skills to bring relief in the aftermath of humanitarian catastrophe.

More than 300 Canadian Armed Forces personnel are on the ground, right now, in the Philippines, focusing largely in the area of Panay Island that was in the direct path of the typhoon.

Our military is relying on the CC-177 Globemaster and CC-150 Polaris aircraft to move personnel and equipment to where they need to be, and to support our efforts while they are under way. Two Griffon helicopters have also been deployed to assist with transportation of food, non-food items and shelter to remote communities on the ground. I should let the House know that a third helicopter is on its way.

The DART is about to provide clean water to Filipinos through reverse osmosis water purification units. One such unit has been installed, and water purification is expected to start very shortly. A second water purification unit is already on its way. The unit is a truly impressive piece of equipment. It has the ability to purify up to 12,000 gallons of safe drinking water a day.

I had the pleasure of visiting Canadian Forces Base Trenton last Friday to see off a small contingent of personnel and their specialized equipment, including one of these purification units. Each of them was ready to go and wanting to help, and it made me and indeed anyone who was there very proud to be a Canadian.

As we speak, they are doing amazing work to help Filipinos begin to overcome this tragedy. At a time when engineering, medical and logistical expertise is desperately needed on the ground, the Canadian Armed Forces are able to provide this support to those whose lives depend upon it.

This is a major operation. It is one consistent with the role that Canadians always take when there is an emergency in the world. Again, I am very proud and pleased that we are undertaking this debate. I am very pleased and proud, of course, of the efforts of members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

● (1940)

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I would like to commend the government for taking swift action on the Philippines. It is usually not its style to do so. It was not when Washi hit the Philippines last time. Certainly when it did take action in China in 2008, it had to be brought there screaming and kicking. It was forced to do so. However, this time around the government is to be commended for the work it is doing.

My question to the minister is very simple. I think we are matching dollar for dollar, \$20 million or \$25 million. The government has allocated that money. Out of that \$20 million or \$25 million that has been allocated, how much are we allocating for DART? Is the cost of the DART above and beyond the announcements that have been made so far, or is the DART cost in that envelope? Can he give us clarification on that?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson:** Mr. Chair, the cost of DART is over and above the money that will be allocated to non-governmental organizations and money that will be used to provide assistance to the people of the Philippines.

I do not agree with the premise of the hon. member's questions. This government has an outstanding record when it comes to standing up and helping people around the world in need. Look at what happened in Haiti. We were there on the ground. We do more than our share in terms of our population and size in the world. We are there if there is a tsunami or a crisis in Turkey or Haiti. In all these places, we are there to help.

That is what we are doing in the Philippines. We are moving quickly and decisively to help those people in their time of need. It is completely consistent and characteristic of the efforts of this government and the people of Canada.

● (1945)

**Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the minister for his speech. I would also like to thank the government for its quick and full response to this crisis in the Philippines.

I want to bring us back to a more positive note and the kinds of things that have been inspired in my community. A group of volunteers, led by Dominga Passmore, Laila Pires, Leonor Santos, and Annette Beech, very quickly put together a benefit last Friday. The lineup went around the block, in the driving rain. People wanted to come to the dinner and contribute money to the Red Cross, which the government is then going to match.

This action of the government helps us validate that very strong response to the Filipino Canadian community, which always contributes by sending money home. They contribute here by looking after our kids and looking after those who need care in the home. When they step forward very quickly to raise several thousand dollars in one evening, I think it is a very good thing that we can validate that by matching those funds.

**Hon. Rob Nicholson:** Mr. Chair, that is a very good point. The hon. member points out what we know about and have experienced with the people of this country. When other people are in need, Canadians want to help. The example he gave is typical of the response Canadians have had and will continue to have.

There is a large Filipino Canadian community within Canada that is quite concerned about this. However, this effort involves everyone in this country. The response I have heard from all my colleagues in the House of Commons, and indeed what I am hearing on the ground wherever I go, is that people want to get involved. They want to make a contribution.



*Government Orders*

When I was here about a week ago, I pointed out that Canadians should be careful where they make their donations. In their enthusiasm, we want to make sure that these are registered charities and legitimate organizations working in the best interests of the people of the Philippines. That being said, what we will see up until December 8, when the government has indicated it will continue to match dollar for dollar, is a very impressive effort by the people of this country, just as we saw with Haiti and other places around the world.

**Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC):** Mr. Chair, just for the benefit of the people watching this debate, I wonder if the Minister of National Defence could talk a bit about the efforts DART is making. We know that it is a response team for disasters. However, it may be that some of the people watching do not understand what its responsibilities are. Could the minister let people know what it does?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson:** Mr. Chair, I appreciate that comment and thank the hon. member for that question.

There were individuals from Canada and Canada's Armed Forces right on the ground immediately to assess the situation. Then, working with the government of the Philippines, a number of our allies, and non-governmental organizations, we were able to put in members of the DART team. They do a number of tasks. I indicated in my opening remarks that setting up water purification and getting that going was part of it. They are clearing some of the disaster area, re-establishing the essential services or making forays vis-a-vis their helicopters to areas to see and assess the situation. That is all part of what this team does.

Again, they will be working with those non-governmental organizations and other countries that are interested in helping, and indeed, with the Philippines government, to make sure that people get the kind of assistance they need. Moving in medical supplies is one of the efforts they have already made on the ground. There is clean drinking water and tablets. All of these initiatives have been important for this effort. All Canadians, and indeed all the people around the world who look at what Canada does, will continue to hold this country in high esteem and be very proud of the efforts this country is making and will continue to make.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I rise today to speak about the horrific typhoon we just witnessed in the Philippines. Sadly, this is not the first time. It happened just a year ago, prior to 2012, with the 2011 typhoon. We have to acknowledge that. The people of the Philippines are a generous people, a resilient people, but this typhoon was the strongest typhoon we have seen.

The effects of the typhoon have been noted. I will go over some of the numbers. They are important to put on the record. Some 8,000 Filipinos had fled to evacuation centres before the typhoon hit. They mobilized, because they knew that this was going to happen. Many of the centres themselves were unable to withstand the tsunami-like storm surges. The winds and the storm were so strong that even the places people went for safe harbour were destroyed.

At least 13 million people have been affected throughout the Philippines. That is half the population of our country. It is hard to even conceptualize. The death toll is about 4,000, but we know that will probably rise as they enter some of the areas government officials and international contingents on the ground have not been

able to access. More than 18,000 people were injured and 1,600 people are still missing. That is the latest number.

Clearly, it is a massive disaster. I do not know about you, Mr. Chair, and others in the House, but when we saw the images on television and read the reports, it broke our hearts to see so many vulnerable children without parents, to see whole communities wiped out. It has also taken a toll on the economy.

The government has responded quickly. We have to keep our eyes on what the next steps are. When we go through a tragedy like this, although each one is different, we need to have an immediate response and get resources on the ground and to the people who are able to deliver the aid and support immediately. We know that people were already on the ground ready to serve and respond. Then it is a matter of coordination and making sure that the aid will not be stuck. We had that problem in Haiti. We had a lot of problems pushing the aid out to the people who needed it. We need to be vigilant in the Philippines.

Right now there is a vital need to help people go to the next step. We have seen the relief start to have an effect. The next steps are the following: we need to look at rebuilding in the short term to build for the long term, and we need to see cash-for-work programs.

One thing we know from the Haiti experience and the NGOs on the ground is that we need to get people to do that work themselves and we need to pay them to do the work. It is particularly effective when women are paid for work to get things moving, because they are able to distribute the money they get from work to help with their children. That is a really important, smart policy we should be focused on, the cash for work programs that some aid agencies are involved in.

We need to look at farmers. This is an important period of time for farmers and the fisheries. We need to get them the tools. A lot of their tools were wiped out, so we need to look at that in the short term. Aid agencies are looking at that.

We also need to support and protect the most vulnerable people. I mentioned women and children. The vulnerability of women and children is heightened during any catastrophe. We need to be vigilant and make sure that the programs we are funding will protect women and children in particular, but not exclusively.

On balance, things are a bit better than we have heard they were in other disasters, but the response is still a matter of coordinating everything.

There are some problems working with the Filipino government, but generally speaking, we need to help them where they have problems and make sure that things are coordinated.

Canadians have responded extraordinarily well, and we have heard that from the minister and others. We all have our own stories. I hope all of us have donated.

*Government Orders*

● (1950)

I would just make a plea to those who are watching. It is really important that people donate. They have until December 8 to donate. There is a terrific website, *together.ca*, where aid organizations have come together to share resources. *Together.ca* is a fantastic one-stop shop for that.

We have seen people do grassroots organizing. This December 3, in my own constituency, there will be a fundraiser called “Block Love”. It will be at the Orange Art Gallery in Hintonburg, not far from here. Two women, Anna-Karina Tabunar and Daphne Guerrero, decided that they would do something, and they are organizing a fundraiser on December 3 from 4:30 to 7:30.

That is why it is so important for Canadians to give and for the government to acknowledge that and ensure that the matching funds are there. We are glad to see that.

We have a disaster, and we have the response. We have to see the long-term commitment to rebuild. We have to be focused on who we are helping out, looking at farmers, women, and children, and be aware of the need to rebuild in the short term and be there for the long term.

We also have to be aware and put on the table another thing, and that is climate change. Right now, in Poland, where the negotiations have been going on, we have the delegate from the Philippines on a hunger strike, because he understands that this is about climate change. This is a genuine plea to the members of the current government. If they have the sense to follow up on the aid to the Philippines, they can do that by genuinely acknowledging that the effects of climate change are affecting the people of the Philippines more than we could ever know. If we are serious about helping the people of the Philippines, the next step for the government is to be serious about climate change, negotiate in good faith, acknowledge the science of climate change, and start helping to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. It is the people of the Philippines, the people of sub-Saharan Africa, and the people of the north who are most affected by climate change and who contribute the least to climate change.

I have given the Conservatives credit for responding, but I passionately urge them to acknowledge that climate change is the big player here. We have to be serious about this. It is with great sadness that we see these deaths occur. However, we have to acknowledge that we need to prevent this from happening. Some say that it is too late. I say that we have to do what we can. Let us acknowledge the delegate from the Philippines at the climate change talks in Poland right now, who is on a hunger strike trying to get attention from the world and from Canada, and actually be serious about climate change.

I want to finish by acknowledging every Canadian who has contributed, but I particularly underline the Filipino Canadian community, whom I know personally in places like Winnipeg, here in Ottawa, and Vancouver. We all know and have friends throughout the country who are Filipino Canadians. They are resilient and passionate. They are the ones who have been the first responders. Let us stay with them. Let us not abandon them. Let us ensure that Canada is in it for the long haul and that we work in solidarity with the people of the Philippines and do not turn our backs.

Let us continue this debate in a constructive way to look for solutions to help the people in the Philippines in the short term and the long term and make sure that we do not forget them.

● (1955)

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for his speech and for raising important issues like climate change and extreme weather events and the need for a long-term commitment. We have to help the Philippines recover, and, I would add, build resilience to prevent this in the future, and build stronger communities.

I agree that keeping mothers and babies healthy is an urgent priority in the wake of an emergency. Keeping the youngest survivors of Typhoon Haiyan safe and protected must also be a key priority while their homes and communities are being rebuilt in the aftermath of a devastating storm. Survival means addressing children's education, health, psychological well-being, and safety. Children are going to need the appropriate activities for their ages, including play, sports, informal learning, and discussion groups that will help their recovery.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for that intervention because it is really about looking at this with a wide angle lens. I want to build on what my colleague was saying about building the resilience. It is very important to understand that where the typhoon hit hardest is in a place where people rely on coconut for their income: fruit, oil, milk and husks that comes from the coconut. Every one of us saw those pictures where it wiped out all the coconut trees.

Think of depending on that for income, for those of us who might be farmers. Imagine it wiped out all the herd. They have nothing. Farmers understand if they are left without a crop or without a herd, they are left with nothing.

That is really what we are talking about. In the short term it is ensuring that there is support in transition and then in the long term, helping these people rebuild their economy, which basically was wiped out, which is another devastation, losing a house or home, but also access to any income at all.

● (2000)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech and for the steps he has taken to address the situation. My colleague asked the minister how the funds have been allocated and to whom.

Could the hon. member tell me how he feels about the way the funds have been allocated?

[*English*]

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, I am glad the minister clarified what we heard because Canadians were wondering whose money it was that was being pledged. We heard the number \$40 million. We know there were \$15 million, but a lot of that was pledged money.

*Government Orders*

I will give a rundown of the \$20 million to date: UN World Food Programme, \$4 million; UNICEF, \$3 million; Red Cross \$2 million; International Organization for Migration, \$2 million; World Vision Canada, \$2 million; Oxfam, \$1.5 million; Plan Canada, \$1.5 million; Doctors Without Borders, \$1 million; CARE Canada, \$1 million; Save the Children, \$1 million; World Health Organization, \$800,000; and the UN Office for Humanitarian Affairs, \$200,000.

This is the lay out of the money, but what is important to note is the lion share of the money has been coming from Canadians. I would like the government to break that open when it announces that, just to be transparent.

Finally, while we are on the issue of money, the government should also acknowledge that this fiscal year there is a lot of money that has lapsed. If the need is there, not just for the Philippines, I hope the Conservatives are ready to acknowledge that there is money they can pledge, if needed, out of the pot of money that has lapsed for this fiscal year, as we saw in the public accounts, for Syria as well.

**Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I want to thank my colleague from Ottawa Centre for his intervention tonight and how important this debate is. It is to show and demonstrate that members in Parliament are standing in unison with Canadians across the country, especially with the Filipino Canadian community in so many urban centres and across Canada in rural communities like mine in Selkirk—Interlake. These are fantastic people and they are very concerned about their loved ones back home.

Again, I appreciate the words of support coming from the opposition, knowing full well that the government is going to match all private donations, dollar for dollar, until December 8. Money that has been flowing into all sorts of charities at this point in time and any donation that has been made by Canadians to those charitable organizations, those NGOs are the best route to deliver aid on the ground and work through other agencies, which are specialists in humanitarian crises.

I would ask my colleague to talk about that and encourage Canadians to continue to give and donate. Those matching funds can be used to double those donations and essentially make a difference because the Philippines has been so badly devastated by Typhoon Haiyan.

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, I want to start my response by underlining something that is very important. Some people think the best thing to do is to take material goods, pack them together and send them to some of the organizations that are sending relief abroad. We want to underline the fact that is not helpful because of the expense of sending those goods. If anything, people could have a garage sale to raise some cash and donate that to the appropriate organizations. People of goodwill will want to do things in the way they see best fit, but we have to remind them that money is the way to do it. As my friend from Manitoba said, there are organizations that already have people on the ground, they have the infrastructure and they are ready to respond.

On that note, I mentioned that together.ca is one of the ways people can go online to donate. It is website of the Humanitarian Coalition, which is a couple of registered NGOs that have come

together to put their resources together, a one-stop shop. UNICEF is doing great work. There are a number of organizations. I think the department has ways to access those organizations.

The other thing I want to mention is that this is an opportunity reach out to our fellow Canadians. I mentioned one of the events coming up in my riding. As parliamentarians, we should connect with our communities to find out what is going on, promote those activities and get people to connect with each other. It is very isolating if people have family members who are going through this crisis right now. They are alone and are trying to deal with it. This is a time when we, as Canadians and as members of Parliament showing leadership, donate personally, but also promote those opportunities for people to come together.

I remember well the earthquake in Haiti, its aftermath and some of the events that happened in my riding. People came together to raise funds and Haitian Canadian were there. It was enormous support, not just the money that was being raised, but also the solidarity and seeing people looking out for their community and their family members.

We know that the Filipino Canadian community has been helping to build the Philippines for many years through remittance. This is not new for them. It is just a matter of Canadians understanding it is our time to step up to do what many Filipino Canadians have been doing with remittances back home. Now is our chance to do it through to December 8 to show that we care as well. I encourage all Canadians to do this to show that we are with the people of the Philippines.

● (2005)

**Mr. Hoang Mai:** Mr. Chair, with respect to a long-term solution, he mentioned the Philippine official who was on a hunger strike and climate change. Could my colleague expand on that, please?

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, I mentioned him because I wanted to ensure that in the debate tonight we did not just leave it at the short-term response, that this has to be understood to be part of what is happening with our changing climate and that someone has taken a stand that should be noted by the rest of the world. As I said earlier, I passionately plead with the government to acknowledge that climate change is real, that it is connected to what is happening in the Philippines. This is an opportunity for us all to not just look at the short term but to look at the cause and the prevention of further typhoons. These are going to happen. This is the new reality.

A public policy review of how we actually tool up and respond is one thing, but also what we can do to bring down the GHG emissions to ensure we do our bit to deal with catastrophic climate change and the whole issue of climate justice.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I will be splitting my time with my friend and colleague, the hon. member for Markham—Unionville.

*Government Orders*

All of us in the House, the people's House, and across Canada have been shaken by the frightening images of devastating Typhoon Haiyan and by the terrible human suffering. Although the ultimate toll of destruction is not yet clear, it is estimated that nearly 13 million people are affected, including over four million displaced and two and a half million in need of food aid.

We keep the people of the Philippines in our thoughts and prayers, as we do Filipino Canadians across our country who are anxious about their family and friends back home. We also keep the aid, emergency workers and military personnel who are working around the clock in harrowing conditions in our thoughts and prayers.

All of us are relieved that a major international relief mission is under way to help the survivors and that Canada is part of the effort. The United Nations pledged \$25 million; the United States \$20 million, aircraft carrier USS *George Washington* and officials from U.S. AID; and the United Kingdom \$16 million, a Royal Navy warship and Royal Air Force military.

Last week the United Nations and its partners launched an appeal for \$301 million to provide humanitarian assistance. As of Saturday, the appeal is 26% funded.

We recognize that the Canadian government contributed \$5 million to the aid effort as well as paying for the Disaster Assistance Response Team. We are thankful for the generosity of Canadians who have now donated almost \$20 million, and we must remember that the government is matching Canadians' contributions.

The Liberals wish to offer our full support for the aid that the government has provided and promised to match in donations. However, given the lessons we have all learned from the tragedy in the Haiti, would the government consider two other measures? Would the government extend the deadline for matching funds until the end of the calendar year? Would the government grant visa extensions for students, temporary workers and workers from the typhoon area?

We expect financial support to increase as more information becomes available. Official estimates of what it may cost to rebuild and restore the affected areas of the Philippines now runs to almost \$6 billion and many survivors will be dependent on aid for months to come. We do not want the government to think that this money is the end of Canada's role in this tragic event.

Canada is home to a significant Filipino diaspora and we must be ready to do more in the future when called upon by the international community.

Ensuring that everyone has safe drinking water remains a major challenge, as does the need for emergency shelter and basic protection for women and children as 500,000 homes have been destroyed. An estimated 3.2 million women and 4.6 million children need psychosocial support and protection.

Let me recognize the tremendous courage, resiliency and strength of the people of the Philippines. The airport in Tacloban, which was almost entirely destroyed in the storm, has emerged as a relief hub with numerous aid flights landing each day carrying food, generators, heavy-lifting equipment, medicine and water and people are getting the vital relief supplies they need.

Let me finish by continuing to encourage Canadians to help by contacting the Canadian Red Cross, UNICEF Canada or other organizations involved in the relief effort. Canadians have a generous and proud history of providing help in times of crisis.

Let us commit to the Filipino community in Canada that in the weeks ahead we are here for it to listen, to be a source of strength, to help solve problems, to be a source of refuge. Let us also commit to work tirelessly with our partners across the Philippines and around the world to reach those in need and support their recovery.

Our assistance must not only save lives today, but must also reduce the risk of disaster tomorrow. We must help strengthen the resilience of local communities.

Our friends in the Philippines face a long, hard road ahead, but they must be assured that they have a friend and partner in Canada.

● (2010)

**Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for her comments and I thank the opposition for its support for what Canada is doing. I welcome them to work with us.

I wonder if the member could speak to some of the things that she has observed in her own community. The Filipino community, particularly, has gotten involved and we have seen other Canadians decide to step up to the plate and put together fundraisers of their own. I wonder if she could tell the House some of the things that she has seen in her own constituency and that she is perhaps involved in.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Mr. Chair, I think everyone is involved. We all want to reach out to a community that is hurting. We are watching our family around the world hurt. It is really important.

What I am hearing from the community is that they have two questions they would really like answered by the government. First, will the government extend the matching funds until the end of the calendar year? We have not heard an answer on that. Second, will the government grant visa extensions for students, temporary workers and other workers from the typhoon area? That is what we are hearing from the community.

● (2015)

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I want to thank my colleague for her presentation. I can sense in her voice the anguish of what she has been hearing about the difficulties the Filipino community in Canada are facing.

*Government Orders*

I noticed that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development just got up and thanked us for assisting them, but again, I think we can do more as Canadians. I think we need to extend it. I remember when the tsunami hit, it was close to a quarter of a billion dollars. I remember that for the Muzaffarabad earthquake, it was about \$75 million. The previous Liberal government did this. Then there is the government of the day, and I acknowledge that, which also did it for Haiti.

We have to remember that there were two instances when the Conservatives did this. In one instance, they had the House prorogued because they were facing difficulty. Right now, we are facing more difficulty within the Senate. Although they mean well, maybe they are just doing it to offset what is happening. I would hate very much for that to be their point.

I was just wondering if my colleague could share her view with us of whether the government is doing enough.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:** Mr. Chair, the government should not think that this is the end of the government's commitment to the Philippines. We expect it to continue to provide assistance as long as the situation requires.

We have to remember that over 12 million people are affected in nine regions, and more than 920,000 people have been displaced. They are seeking shelter in 995 evacuation centres. These are host communities and makeshift centres. The number of people who are affected and in need of support will continue to increase as access to additional affected areas opens and needs assessment takes place.

What we would like to hear from the government is what plans it has going forward for relief and recovery, and the specific activities it has planned after one month, three months, and going forward.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I am very pleased to participate in this debate. I completely agree with my colleague that we should also extend our sympathies to the Filipinos here in Canada, not only to those in the Philippines.

[*English*]

My colleague expressed very well the depth of our sorrow and our condolences on the occasion of this tragedy. I would like to address what one might call more practical or more concrete issues.

As has been said by others, we do think that the government has provided a reasonably good reaction in the short term. It is a reasonably good reaction in terms of direct contributions and matching contributions. As a former defence minister, I was also pleased to see the quick deployment of the DART and of the helicopters.

[*Translation*]

However, I do not think it is enough to look at the short term; we must also look at the long term. The tragedy the Philippines has experienced is so big that it will take five years, even 10 years, to rebuild the affected areas. The danger is that, once the media are no longer there, governments might lose interest in the situation and stop sending assistance to the Philippines after a short while, whereas the needs will last for a very long time.

● (2020)

[*English*]

My point is that while we can in general support the government for its short-term action, we have to be equally concerned about the long run, which will last for at least five years or ten. After the media attention has gone away and the television cameras are no longer on, will the government still be there, providing the necessary assistance for the longer term reconstruction of those devastated islands, which we have seen so graphically on television but which will not remain on television for that much longer?

I combine these long-term concerns for reconstruction with the long-term concern mentioned by my NDP colleague from Ottawa Centre regarding climate change. While I commend overall the government for short-term reaction, I believe as well that we must not lose sight of the longer term, neither in terms of the dollar needs for reconstruction and health care nor on the issue of climate change.

[*Translation*]

That was my first point. I will wear my immigration critic hat to talk about the second point. Once again, the government has good intentions. However, as the saying goes, the devil is often in the details. If we look at the details, we cannot be at all sure that their intentions will really help the situation.

For instance, in terms of immigration, the government intends to take speedy action in sending assistance to those in significantly affected regions and to prioritize their cases.

[*English*]

However, this is where the devil could be in the details. For individuals in significantly affected areas, their cases will be prioritized. That sounds good, but what does it mean?

Let me put on the table the waiting times today for parents and grandparents from the Philippines is 99 months. For children, it is 15 months. For skilled workers, it is 18 months. For provincial program people, it is 12 months. For family live-in caregivers, many from the Philippines, it is 39 months. These are very long times. For people from the affected areas, does that mean they will be prioritized to the extent that wait times will be reduced from 39 months to 38 months or to 10 months, or to two months?

While the ideas put forward by the immigration department are laudable, I think we need more meat. We need to know before too long how many extra people will be let into Canada from these so-called prioritized areas.

We in the Liberal Party, and I as the immigration critic, will certainly be wanting to get more meat in coming weeks. I know it cannot happen overnight. How many more Filipinos will be allowed to come into this country as a consequence of this new policy, and what does their prioritization mean in terms of actual wait times for people from affected areas?

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I want to read a quote into the record and get my colleague's take on it. It is from Valerie Amos, the UN humanitarian coordinator.

*Government Orders*

An estimated 3.2 million women and 4.6 million children need psychosocial support and protection against violence, trafficking and exploitation. Pregnant women, new mothers and other vulnerable groups also need special care.

We heard a little bit from the government on this. This quote was from the UN coordinator on the ground. Obviously we need to be very specific on what kind of support we would give.

**Hon. John McCallum:** Mr. Chair, I think that is another illustration of the point that the devil is in the details. Perhaps what he is alluding to is that as a consequence of this disaster, there may be more people in such situations in the Philippines than there were before. They certainly need assistance and they may be part of the group that should be prioritized, to use the word that the government is using, to come more quickly to Canada or else to receive aid in the Philippines from Doctors Without Borders or one of our aid agencies.

I certainly agree that cases like that at the time of a crisis such as this are frequently very urgent in nature, so whether the assistance is on the ground in the Philippines through an NGO or to come quickly to Canada, in either case speed may be of the essence and there ought to be a high degree of urgency. I commend the government overall for responding quickly, but in particular areas such as my colleague raises, there may be a need for speedier action than we have so far observed.

• (2025)

**Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC):** Mr. Chair, just to set the record straight on all of this, the member was a member of a government that allowed a backlog of some 900,000 files, which we inherited when we became government. We are working very diligently to ensure that our immigration system is fair and transparent and that we bring the people to Canada who are going to have the opportunity to make a new life here.

He alluded to the fact that he was a former member of defence. He talks about the long run. Right now, we are in the middle of a crisis. We have our DART team there doing the analysis and helping out right away. Would it not be prudent of the government to allow that to take place and get the information back on how we can go forward from here, to ensure that DART does its job and that the analysis is done of how the Philippines can move forward?

**Hon. John McCallum:** Mr. Chair, I am afraid my hon. colleague over there is a bit deluded. She might not have heard, but I commended the government for sending the DART. I said overall the government was doing a good job in the short run. My concern is for the long term, that the government will not stay there for the long term. However, I am with her on the DART.

She talked about immigration and I thought we were talking about the Philippines. Instead, she drags out her PMO talking points, which are absolutely false, on immigration. As I have made clear in the House, in the last five years under Conservative rule, the average waiting time for family class immigrants has gone from 13 months to 34 months. That is almost a tripling under Conservative rule. The waiting times, as I indicated, for live-in caregivers from the Philippines, which is what we are talking about now, is over three years. For parents and grandparents, it is over five years. This is dramatically higher than it was five years ago.

These PMO talking points about Liberals and immigration are utterly false and the challenge for these Conservatives is to get their own act together on immigration and bring down these terribly high waiting times, which are wreaking havoc on the new Canadians of this country.

**Hon. Lynne Yelich (Minister of State (Foreign Affairs and Consular), CPC):** Mr. Chair, I would like to begin by expressing my deepest sympathies to those affected by Typhoon Haiyan.

I rise today to talk about the Government of Canada's swift actions in support of Canadian citizens affected by this devastating typhoon. I do so in my role as Minister of State for Foreign Affairs, responsible for consular. Canada's consular response to the typhoon is but one element of the whole-of-government response to this humanitarian disaster. I will focus today on consular aspects.

The Department of Foreign Affairs began quickly and effectively reaching out to Canadians before the storm even hit the Philippines. Assisting Canadians in the region before and after this disaster has been a priority of our consular officials at the Embassy of Canada in Manila and in Ottawa.

The typhoon made landfall in the Philippines on November 8, 2013. On Wednesday, November 6, the embassy in Manila sent its first message to registered Canadians warning of the storm. Our department's travel advice was updated on the same day and posted online at [travel.gc.ca](http://travel.gc.ca), and two more messages were sent on November 8.

The first advised that the embassy would be temporarily closed due to the storm. The second advised that the typhoon had made landfall and reminded Canadians to monitor local news and weather sites. It also urged Canadians to call family in Canada to let them know they were okay, and on the same day the embassy's Facebook page and Twitter feeds were used to update Canadians.

The day the storm struck, and every day since, the consular staff at the embassy has been reaching out to Canadians to confirm their location and their well-being, and to ask if they need consular assistance. On a daily basis, they continue to try to reach Canadians whose whereabouts have yet to be confirmed, by every means available.

Mr. Chair, I think I forgot to say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Cypress Hills—Grasslands.

I will continue to talk about what our department is doing. Our officials are calling and sending emails and texts and using social media. The same communication mechanisms have been used to provide information on transportation options and other advice.

The destruction of communications infrastructure has complicated these efforts. Communications are improving. The embassy's consular outreach efforts are now more successful.

*Government Orders*

We have bolstered our capacity at our emergency watch and operation centre here in Ottawa. The emergency watch and operation centre continues to take calls and emails from Canadians involved in the situation in the Philippines. This watch is 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

We have also mobilized our standing rapid deployment team. This is to increase staff on the ground in the Philippines, and they are helping to reach out to affected Canadians and provide assistance.

The embassy has deployed a consular immigration team to Tacloban, where we maintain a daily presence. We maintain a daily presence to identify Canadian citizens and to assist Canadian citizens in departing the area.

The team, supported by local Philippine National Police, is now actively reaching out into the vicinity of Tacloban City, checking last known locations for Canadian citizens in the area. A consular team was also placed alongside the DART in Roxas City to assist Canadians in that area. Of our missing Canadians in the area, all were accounted for and visited. That team has now moved on to locate and help Canadians in need in other areas.

The embassy has reached out to allies to ensure effective information sharing and coordinate our efforts. Canadian consular officials are providing similar services to all our allies. I am proud of our government's response to this crisis.

I would like to assure members that the emergency and consular assistance will continue to be provided to those Canadian citizens in need in the Philippines. I want to congratulate those who have worked so hard on the ground to help Canadians who are in need.

• (2030)

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I have just a couple of specific questions.

I wonder if the minister of state could update if she has information on how many Canadians are missing. I think yesterday was the most recent update we had on how many Canadians were still missing.

The other question I have is just in terms of capacity with consular affairs. I know there had been a look at bolstering our capacity in the Philippines. Could she tell us how many consular officials have been sent to the Philippines to help support people on the ground?

Those are two very specific questions. First, how many Canadians are still missing? Second, how many Canadian consular affairs officials have been sent to the Philippines to help out on the ground?

**Hon. Lynne Yelich:** Mr. Chair, yes, we have had a team of Canadian officials in Canada and on the ground. We have increased the resources. We have doubled the number of our officials who are on the ground. When I spoke today to our deputy minister, I believe he told me there were eight, but I am not sure if that has increased or if that is of yesterday.

The situation has been fluid as far as the number of people with whom we are actively trying to connect. We have 12 Canadians as of today with whom we are still trying to connect and who we believe have been affected by Typhoon Haiyan. Our team in Ottawa and on the ground in this area is there. It is continuing to provide assistance to Canadians who need it. For members' interest as well, we are

advised that commercial U.S. and American military flights are currently available, and should they wish to leave an area affected by the typhoon or depart the Philippines, those modes of transportation are available.

We do have consular officials at the airport in Tacloban and in our embassy and at the airport in Manila. They are contacting missing Canadians by any available means, and we are encouraging people to try to find, contact and reassure their loved ones so we can have some help from the persons who might still be trying to get in touch with us.

• (2035)

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, we are pleased that DART is deployed and has gotten to work immediately to help those affected by the typhoon. Do the government members have an idea of the cost estimate for DART assistance? Do they know what it is going to be? Is the government going to subtract this cost from the money it donates to the relief effort? We know there has been \$30,000, the government has given \$5 million and Canadians have given \$15 million. Is DART above and beyond the government's \$5 million?

**Hon. Lynne Yelich:** Mr. Chair, the Minister of National Defence was in earlier this evening and he answered that question exactly as the member would like to have heard it. That is that this will be above, and the cost would not be included as part of the package that is our relief to the Philippines.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech. I would also like to hear more of what he has to say about this topic.

This is not a partisan debate. The people of the Philippines are in our thoughts. I would like to know what medium- and long-term plans the government has to help the Philippines, especially since we know that the Philippines has been particularly affected by climate change.

[*English*]

**Hon. Lynne Yelich:** Mr. Chair, the member is absolutely correct. This is not partisan right now. We are on the ground and, as we said, we are doing what we can to reach the people who are in need.

I was in Winnipeg last week, speaking to the community. The members of the community right at hand are worried about whether the money is going to get to the people who need it, and they are very concerned about some of the scams that are going on. This is a concern of the Philippine people who can see that Canada's response has been over and above. We have always been there. I have, from CIDA, many of the key operational projects that we have had. We are not going to let them down at any time, I can assure members of that just from the investments we have made.

I was in Indonesia this year at the APEC women forum. Canada was thanked for its work and for the projects we have invested in through CIDA, and we should have no concerns about whether our government has been there, is there, and will be there because we have been, we will be, and we will continue to be there for the Philippine people.

*Government Orders*

**The Assistant Deputy Chair:** Before we resume debate, I want to reiterate to members or perhaps remind members that one of the benefits of take note debates is that they are informal, and therefore members are invited to take seats in the House that perhaps might put them closer to each other and perhaps encourage the kind of pleasant and fruitful discourse we are seeing this evening.

Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

• (2040)

**Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Chair, it is good to be here this evening, and obviously the thoughts of the House tonight are on our friends in the Philippines. Those of us who are praying people have been praying for them over the last few days, and our prayers continue for those who have been affected by the devastation of Typhoon Haiyan.

It is truly staggering. I do not think we can really understand how many lives have been impacted by this disaster. We are hearing that an estimated 13 million people have been affected across the Philippines, with the passing of a single storm, with over 4 million people put out of their homes and more than 4,000 people who lost their lives. For us who are at a distance, it is a very difficult thing to even be able to comprehend those numbers.

Many other people have been impacted as well. There are people across Canada who have had to wait days to find out about their friends and families.

I want to quickly tell members about my area. It has only been 100 years since my area was settled, and that in itself is a remarkable story about how settlers came from around the world. They settled in western Canada. They lived together and built a society that has become a successful model and has become the heartland of the nation of Canada.

We have always relied on immigration in our province. Over the last decade, in particular, as the economy has really grown and bloomed, we have turned to other nations to send us their best, and we have relied on people coming in from other countries to expand our economy.

The Philippines has been one of those nations that has provided us with some of the best, great new Canadians. In my own small community of only 350 people, we now have 17 Filipino families. We have a manufacturing plant, and it has turned to these families and relied on them to come to our country. These are families who have chosen to live here, and they are invaluable in our community.

Throughout southwestern Saskatchewan, throughout the riding of Cypress Hills—Grasslands, we now have members from the Filipino community in virtually every community in the riding, and they bring a spirit that has been a great asset to our communities. They focus on family and friends and have a strong focus on their faith and hard work. They have become extremely valued members and contributors to so many of our communities.

While our government has been quick to respond—we have heard about that tonight and heard about the various ways we have

responded—the real story of compassion is found in various communities across this country.

I would like to take a couple of minutes to talk about what has happened in southwestern Saskatchewan. We have an active local Filipino association that is under the leadership of a young man named Emilio Completo. They decided to hold a fundraiser for their folks back home. They had volunteers from communities such as the Latin American community, the local Swift Current community and communities around my riding. The response from my area of southwestern Saskatchewan was actually amazing. The local area donated \$21,458, which is going to be matched by federal government contributions.

The local association has been very active over the past few years. It intends to target this money to solve some of those short-term problems that we talked about tonight and then to actually deal with some of the longer term problems as well. They want to try to take care of immediate needs in the areas that have been most devastated, and they look forward to having a good discussion in their community about how they then might move on to share in some of the things like rebuilding schools, perhaps, and other projects that will be important.

When I talked to Emilio last night about this successful fundraiser, he made the point that he really wanted to pass on his and his community's sincere thanks to the people of Swift Current and the people of all of southwestern Saskatchewan for the generosity they have shown to the Filipino people.

He also made the point that he thanked our government for the quick and generous response it has had. The minister mentioned that she was in Winnipeg last week meeting with leaders in the Filipino community, and the Prime Minister has met a number of times with leaders of the Filipino community, and that has led to good communication with them and then the type of response we have seen.

I understand my time is already wrapping up, but I too want to acknowledge the great generosity of the people of southwestern Saskatchewan and the incredible leadership of Emilio and the Filipino association in Swift Current, Saskatchewan, in bringing the community together to support people who are so far away but who need our help so much.

• (2045)

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I thank the minister of state for his intervention. As he is new to his position and also to the committee, I welcome his intervention on this issue. I think it is one of his first interventions as a minister of state on a file like this.

I will ask him a question about logistics because Canada has decided to focus its attention on the Panay Island. I just want to get from him if he can, or if he can it to us later, as to why we are focusing our aid there. That is the first question.

The second question relates to what we would be doing in the medium to long term if we are going to focus our aid in that region. The Panay Island is where Canada has decided to focus its attention. Also, could the member indicate if that is where the focus of our aid shall remain for the next little while?



*Government Orders*

**Mr. David Anderson:** Mr. Chair, in the spirit of co-operation we are showing here tonight, we have been involved in the Philippines and in particular areas and projects. We look forward to continuing those projects in the future as well.

I want to revert back to what I said about my community which is busy fundraising. The people wanted to ensure that they took care of the immediate needs. That is what they are talking about, going into the areas of their friends, family and the people who they know and reaching those immediate needs, getting people back on their feet, back into decent shelters and getting them some food and safe water. Then we would look forward to the rebuilding of infrastructure.

As I pointed out, it is difficult for those of us who have the great benefits and privileges we have here to understand the kind of devastation that can be caused by a storm like this. We will keep working on the programs that we have had in the past, such as support for local governance, the opportunity to improve the business climate in the Philippines for those who are trying to do business and the agribusiness development initiative that we have been a part of, things like trying to transform the lives of women by giving them opportunities to participate in business as well.

We will continue with those kinds of initiatives and look forward to working with our friends as we have in the past.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I would like to congratulate my friend on his new position as well.

We are all here for the people of the Philippines. We have all talked about encouraging people to donate. In light of this, I have a very simple question for the government. Will it extend the matching funds until the end of the calendar year?

**Mr. David Anderson:** Mr. Chair, presently it is until December 8. Of course, that will be considered.

It is important to understand the generosity of Canadians across the country. I just talked about one example. Certainly, we are seeing examples right across the country of projects and events people are organizing in order to support the Filipino people and their communities. I should point out, as I did a bit earlier, that it is not just coming from within their own communities. It is Canadians of all stripes, shapes and sizes who are more than happy and willing to participate and help out, because that is what we do. If we look at Canada's record in the past decades as far as helping out with international disasters, we have been there and will consistently be there.

I can run through some of the things that we are committing to. We have \$30,000 committed to the International Federation of the Red Cross and the Red Crescent. We talked earlier about the \$5 million and the \$15 million top-up on that. We have launched a relief fund which, as the member opposite mentioned, we will be matching dollar for dollar. We are happy to do that. Putting the DART on the ground in the Philippines so quickly was a huge success and a huge assistance to the Philippines as well. We also look forward to, as my colleague mentioned, Citizenship and Immigration Canada prioritizing the processing of applications.

Therefore, it is a multi-pronged approach which includes the generosity of the taxpayers, the government and certainly the hard work of many people to try to rebuild the Philippines again.

● (2050)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I am pleased to rise today to speak to the crisis in the Philippines.

This was an unfortunate and tragic event. Typhoon Haiyan hit hard, and everything we are talking about this evening has to do with helping Filipinos.

I will try to take partisanship out of this as much as possible, and I want to commend the government's actions to help the people of the Philippines through the financial assistance people have mentioned. The government has promised that it will match Canadians' donations to recognized charities dollar for dollar.

I am of Vietnamese origin and I have been particularly moved by this situation. The Philippines holds a special place in my heart. I used to work in Asia, and have been to Manila, in the Philippines. I also vacationed in the Philippines and took diving lessons there. That is the first place I learned to dive. I have tangible and very real ties to the country.

[*English*]

The Filipino community living in Canada is so close. It has tremendously good values when we talk about family and support. That is something with which I am always impressed.

I remember a couple of events in my riding. When we celebrated Valentine's Day, that was an occasion for me to actually see the culture and how they celebrated. There is a love of life that is tremendously strong. That is why my heart goes out to the people in the Philippines and also their families living in Canada which are going through tragic and difficult times right now.

I want to tell them that Canada is behind them. We are working together, all parties, the government and opposition, to try to help people in the Philippines move forward.

I definitely want to mention, for instance, what is happening in my riding of Brossard—La Prairie. On November 23, which is this coming Saturday, there will be a fundraising brunch for the benefit of the victims of Typhoon Haiyan, organized by the Filipino Canadian community of the south shore. It is a community I work with a lot. It is organizing it at Good Shepherd Church community hall at 7900 Naples Street in Brossard. I obviously will be there. There will be three servings. One is at 8 o'clock in the morning, 9:30 a.m. and I think the last one is at 11 a.m.

Hopefully we will work together to try to find other ways to bring the community together. It is all communities, not just the Filipino community, not just the Asian community, but all Canadians together, so we can actually raise a lot of funds to help people in the Philippines.

This type of help is short term. Obviously there are so many things we need to do. A lot of people here have seen some of the coverage and images and they are haunting. We need to work together to change things and make things better for the people in the Philippines.

*Government Orders*

The government has acted quickly, but there will be some challenges ahead.

[*Translation*]

The government has stated that it will take some measures, including some related to immigration. Once again, I do not wish to be too partisan in this case, but I hope that the government will do more than it promised in terms of family reunification in particular.

In my office in Brossard—La Prairie, we have had many problems with wait times in the past. Since I was elected two years ago, wait times for visas and other things have gotten longer.

We have heard the government's promises and, with all my heart, I really hope that they will take shape, that concrete action will be taken to help people come here and to help people over there. Money is certainly important for short-term and medium-term reconstruction. However, we then have to make sure that long-term measures are in place.

● (2055)

When we see the extent of the destruction, we certainly think about everything that must be done to rebuild. Unfortunately, it also makes us think about what happened in Haiti. The international community came together. I am very proud that Canada showed initiative and rose to that occasion.

I want to highlight the generosity of Canadians in general. Canadians from every part of the country have come together to help the people of the Philippines. I repeat that it is very important for people to make sure that the money goes to government-recognized charities so that the government can make a matching contribution. We also have to come up with long-term solutions.

Clearly, in the case of the Philippines, the biggest typhoon in a long time is a direct consequence of climate change.

[*English*]

I will mention an article that came out today in the CBC News. It talks about the impact that the Philippines specifically is suffering because of climate change. The article is titled, “Philippines vulnerable to climate change, consul general says”, and that is the Philippine Consulate General in Toronto.

The article notes that the Philippines is very vulnerable to typhoons and the destruction has slowed down its economy.

If we want to help other countries, we have to take our role seriously. One of the things we have to do is combat climate change. It is very important, and I am not just saying that as a partisan issue.

I will quote from the article, which says:

A Philippine official launched a hunger strike last week to pressure a UN climate change conference to come up with concrete steps to fight global warming. Naderev Sano, a member of the Philippine Climate Change Commission, told the Washington Times he was fasting “in solidarity with my countrymen who are now struggling for food back home”—including his own brother, whom Sano said “has been gathering bodies of the dead with his own two hands.”

It is real. It is happening and we have to do something about it.

One of the reasons I came into politics, became a member and got involved, was because of climate change. We need to protect the

environment, and this is a consequence of what is happening globally.

I read another report that came out of Europe that said Canada had the worst climate change policy in the industrialized world. We came in 55th out of 58 countries, and that is very shameful. I think the three last countries were Iran, Kazakhstan and Saudi Arabia. This makes us think of how we move forward.

[*Translation*]

We need to think about the future, but of course we also need to react immediately. Once again, I tip my hat to the government for acting quickly. I hope that in the medium term, the government will look at everything related to immigration, aid to people in the Philippines and rebuilding.

The hon. member for Ottawa Centre spoke about cash for work programs. Investment is needed so that the people in the Philippines can rebuild their country themselves. We need to help them do that. We also need to have a long-term vision for what we can do. That is the most important issue.

When people talk about climate change, among other things, it is important to take action. I hope that is what the government will do.

I do not want to be partisan in this debate. Our sincere thoughts are with the people in the Philippines. I am very pleased that we can discuss what we can do and what we can improve to help the people of the Philippines.

● (2100)

I need to tell the Filipino community in Brossard—La Prairie that I am very proud of the work they do and that I will continue working with them.

[*English*]

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I would like to commend my colleague from the NDP for his thoughts and his words of wisdom.

I wonder what his take is and what his thoughts are on asking the government to extend the deadline from December 8 to the end of December, to the end of 2013, for the government to match individuals' donations dollar for dollar.

I know in the spirit of Christmas a lot of youngsters might not want to have presents. They might want to donate the money to their folks back home in the Philippines, from the Filipino community, or little children, Canadian children, from other ethnic minorities and from other walks of life might also want to join in on that.

I wonder if you would agree with me and our side of the House that the government should extend this to December 31.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Hoang Mai:** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

First, it is important to recognize the government's action in this regard. We also need to ensure that the money that was promised is given out. We need to listen to what the international community has to say on the subject too.

*Government Orders*

There will be consequences, and we must react to them. On this side of the House, we are open to doing anything we can to help the Filipino community as soon as the government can get involved. There are a number of ways of doing this. Should the government intervene directly to help? I know that in the short term, money is important, but we also have to think about rebuilding. We need to help the people of the Philippines in any way that we can.

[English]

**Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I am grateful for this debate and for the comments made by the member opposite.

However, does he, or does anyone in the NDP benches, really believe that it is good policy, in responding to a humanitarian emergency, to emulate someone who is on a hunger strike to change the weather? Is this the place for that debate when there are 10 million people who are in some degree of humanitarian need, when we are all struggling, still, to reach villages that have been cut off by one of the most severe typhoons?

Yes, someone is on a hunger strike at the climate change conference, but is that the kind of guidance that the NDP is proposing we take, as the Parliament of Canada, as Canadians, on how to act in this particular humanitarian emergency?

Should we be putting all of our effort into praying that the weather changes? Should we not be, rather, concentrating on concrete, tangible action, the way this government has taken it in record time?

[Translation]

**Mr. Hoang Mai:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the minister and congratulate him on his new role.

This is not a partisan debate and, of course, we agree on that. The minister does not understand what is happening when someone tries to send a message saying that climate change is a problem. We have said that we agree with what the government is doing and we are even congratulating it on the measures it has taken.

However, the minister is saying that we cannot do two things at once and this shows the government's real vision or rather its lack thereof. The government is unable to consider the long term and anticipate the outcome.

• (2105)

[English]

We would rather not have people on hunger strikes, but that person would not be doing that, especially in the important role that person is playing, if there was not a problem. From what I understand from the question, it feels like the minister does not believe in climate change. I think the idea was to bring the issue forward.

In the short term, we agree with what the government is doing, in terms of helping and putting the money there.

However, we still have to understand what the reasons were for the typhoon and that climate change does have an impact. One of the consequences of climate change are typhoons and some of the things that we are seeing happen, such as floods in Canada. There are concrete things happening.

Unfortunately, what we have just seen from that question is that the government does not want to act on climate change.

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I really applaud my colleague for his speech. He started off by acknowledging the government's work and applauding them for it. He talked about the need for all of us to work together. Up until this point in the debate, we actually had a very collegial debate and we were sharing ideas back and forth.

What my colleague was pointing out is that right now, there is a climate change conference going on. He read a news report about what someone—

**An hon. member:** Oh, oh!

**Mr. Paul Dewar:** Mr. Chair, we are just having a debate here. It is okay, we do not have to heckle tonight.

What we were really talking about was what is happening on the world stage vis-à-vis climate change and someone who represents the Philippines. It is with deep sadness that we see the minister, of all people, trying to take us into partisan debate.

What my colleague is actually talking about is that we really need to see a long-term strategy. We really need to see that our development policy is going to recognize the changing world. This is not the first catastrophe that we have seen. We saw one in the Sahel recently. In Ethiopia and Somalia, we saw the drought. Sadly, the government did withdraw from the treaty on drought and desertification. It is just a fact.

I just want to get my colleague's thoughts. If we are looking at the immediate response that we have seen from the government and we agree with it, what are we to do when we look at the long-term response to deal with countries, particularly countries that do not have the resources and the resilience to deal with catastrophic climate change? What can we do in the long term to help them?

**Mr. Hoang Mai:** Mr. Chair, just last week, I was asked by a group of students what Canada should do. My response was that we should act as an older sibling in showing, first of all, that we do things right and then help other people. This is basically what we are talking about with other countries.

When the minister asks that type of question, he does not listen to what the consul general of the Philippines in Toronto says. I invite him to read the CBC article. The title is "Philippines vulnerable to climate change, consul general says". It says:

The consul general for the Philippines in Toronto says her country's economy, devastated by Typhoon Haiyan, has long been held back by the many tropical storms that come ashore every year.

Now, we have the official for the Philippines in Warsaw, saying that climate change has an impact on the country's economy.

Again, I am not saying that we are going to change everything, that we are going to act on climate change in a way that will help the Philippines right away. First of all, we have to look at what is happening here in Canada. We see that nothing much is happening. We have to help other countries work together to find solutions.

Ignoring the problem does not help. That is what I see from this minister.

*Government Orders*

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, the outpouring of support that is coming from Canadians from coast to coast is so impressive as we send support financially and issue prayers. It has been overwhelming. A part of what I have witnessed in a number of events that I have had the opportunity to participate in, is that Canadians want to be able to continue to provide and show and demonstrate compassion. There are many different events that are being planned between now and virtually the end of the year.

The leader of the Liberal Party made the suggestion, which he has no doubt mentioned to others, that we allow for individuals to donate for that tax receipt, at the very least, all the way to the end of the fiscal year. I wonder if the member might want to provide comment or just show that we can generate all party support for that idea.

● (2110)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Hoang Mai:** Mr. Chair, I think that my colleague may not have heard my answer to his Liberal colleague, who asked me the same question.

Since I already answered that question, I would like to go back to what is important to me and to the community of Brossard—La Prairie.

I will say once again that the action being taken right now is quite important.

I would also point out that this Saturday, November 23, there will be a fundraiser. The Filipino-Canadian community of the south shore of Montreal has organized a brunch to bring people together and raise funds. It is important to do this right now.

I thank my colleague for his question, because that gives me the opportunity to remind people that they have to contribute by December 8. They have to make sure that their donations go to charities recognized by the government.

[*English*]

**Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I am thankful for the opportunity to speak tonight in this important debate on a subject that has really touched all Canadians, not just those of Filipino heritage but all of us whose friends, neighbours and fellow citizens in communities of every size, as we have already heard in the debate tonight, have been affected. All of us have seen the images on television, not just of a storm, not just of a natural disaster, but of a devastating typhoon of an unprecedented scale that has left a big region of a big country reeling and has driven millions of people, without any warning, into a condition of acute humanitarian need.

What are we seeing across Canada just in this past week and a half? We are seeing an extraordinary response, a very modern phenomenon whereby the Canadian government is able to act quickly. Canadians have responded with enormous generosity. Information has been flowing in because the Philippines is a country wired to us very closely and where information moves, even in conditions of natural disasters such as this, relatively quickly. That has made our response faster, more effective and larger in scale than perhaps we have ever seen in a case so far away from our shores in our history of humanitarian response.

What is at the bottom of Canada's ability to do this? There is a certain resilience, and I take particular pride as Minister of Citizenship and Immigration in the fact that we now have a strong, successful Filipino Canadian community in Canada, many of whom are relatively recent to Canada from the Philippines, who still have relatives and friends there who they know, are in contact with and to whom they have often been sending millions of dollars in remittances, which themselves are a major source of income for the Philippines. It is this group that has led our response.

Yes, the Government of Canada has done a great deal. We have heard about it tonight and we will hear more, but we are extremely proud of our Filipino Canadian co-citizens who have led the way, have shown us the way, in many respects, and whose presence here, linked back to the Philippines, is giving our relationship with that faraway country great resilience and great dynamism at this time.

There is also a question of our economy in that Canada would not have the resources and our Filipino Canadian recent arrivals and those who have been here longer would not be able to remit as much back home were it not for the economic opportunity here. It is another example of why having an economic plan and economic success pays benefits not just in times of prosperity but in times of hardship and acute need, as we are seeing in the Philippines today.

There is also a question of logistics. It is banal, and I know colleagues opposite do not often speak of these questions for predictable reasons, but the DART would not have been there as quickly as it arrived, the medical teams would not be there, the helicopters and other lift would not be there were it not for the fact that this government has acquired C-17 strategic-lift long-distance transport aircraft, which have made it possible to get heavy loads halfway around the world efficiently and actually save lives. Resilience, economic success and good logistics all play a role.

On this side, we are absolutely governed in this debate by our sympathy for those who are still suffering and the relatives of those still in need. Our thoughts and prayers are with those who have lost loved ones and homes, the families who have been injured, have lost livelihoods and do not see the future clearly from where they sit in the Eastern or Western Visayas, on the island of Leyte, on the island of Cebu, on the island of Panay. Our condolences go to those who have lost loved ones and our solidarity goes to all those who are still struggling to get through this crisis.

● (2115)

However, in a time of crisis our message, which we have heard from our Prime Minister from the very beginning and again this week, is one of reassurance: "Canada will be with you". We are confident in leading a strong Canadian effort, not just by government but by the Filipino Canadian community and by Canadians across the board, who have been enormously generous.

We heard the Prime Minister adding \$15 million to our previously announced efforts at the beginning of this week. We heard that \$20 million has already been donated by Canadians, and that will be matched by the Government of Canada. This is good news for those who are still waiting to have their needs looked after.

*Government Orders*

The DART, the Disaster Assistance Response Team, has done a fantastic job on Iloilo in the province of Capiz, as well on the island of Panay. This is the kind of emergency for which the DART was conceived. It is absolutely wonderful to see it deployed in record time and to see it doing that tremendously effective job on the ground. We know that the Canadian Forces, whether in a humanitarian mode or a combat mode, are second to none in the world, and we are very proud of what they are doing today, tonight, and all this week in the Philippines.

As I said earlier, we are also proud of a community that now numbers over 600,000 members in Canada, the Filipino Canadian community. Let me remind the House that in 2012 the Philippines was the second-largest source country for immigration to Canada. Just over 32,700 permanent residents were admitted to Canada last year from the Philippines, a 146% increase since 2004, and we are looking for that trend to continue. We have committed to bringing 17,500 live-in caregivers to Canada next year as part of our effort to deal with a backlog in that area that grew up under the Liberals and went unaddressed for too long. Many of those spaces will be taken up by Filipino Canadians if the past is any indicator.

Despite the seriousness of tonight's subject, we continue to have detours from the opposition into strange spaces. For some reason, opposition members think this is all about climate change, that if we had just negotiated harder in Warsaw maybe this storm would not have happened and the emergency would not be under way. We disagree. There are people on the ground, millions of them, who need aid, and hunger strikes in Warsaw and debates on climate change at this stage are not the solution, just as looking into the root causes of terrorism was not the right response to a tragedy on the day of the Boston Marathon, and just as it is not appropriate for Liberal members to waste time, in an important debate that they asked for, talking about the time frame for family reunification.

This is a program that was a disaster under the Liberals. Everyone knows backlogs have been halved under our government. Everyone knows the situation is better, that we have the largest and most effective team we have ever had in Manila, and that we are bringing record numbers of permanent residents, temporary foreign workers, and visitors from the Philippines under this government. We are proud of that record, proud to build on it, and proud to give members those numbers tonight.

I am proud of what our colleagues are doing on this side. The member for Newmarket—Aurora, who is speaking as part of today's debate, attended a fundraising musical concert that was organized by a movement of Filipino Canadians across the greater Toronto area. Countless of my colleagues have been doing this in communities large and small. I myself was at St. Francis de Sales Church in Ajax, where many members of the congregation trace their roots to the Philippines, and I saw the generosity of not just Filipino Canadian parishioners but of everyone in responding to this need.

We in the Department of Citizenship and Immigration are doing our part by expediting passport processing and giving priority to the applications of those who want to be permanent residents, those who want to be visitors to Canada, and those whose applications we had but who are from the affected areas and who really need the benefit of friends and family support in Canada more urgently than anyone else.

We call on Canadians to help us identify those cases. We have identified hundreds of them. We have had thousands of calls relating to these kinds of cases, but we put out our message to everyone in this House and across Canada to help us to meet the needs of those who deserve our help at this time. Help us to do it by expediting these applications. Help us to replace documents that were lost in the typhoon. Help us to ensure that Canada remains at the absolute forefront of relief efforts in the Philippines, a country we have never been closer to.

• (2120)

**Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I want to congratulate the minister on his appointment as the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. I have not had a chance to do that. This is the first time in the House that I can do that, so congratulations to him. The minister's portfolio is very important, and we wish him well in assisting those on the ground.

I have a couple of key questions. One is a question that I asked before: does the minister have some feedback on why we ended up where we are, in Panay? Are we going to be staying there for the long term?

Seemingly, we are the only ones there. It was affected, but it is not the epicentre. Could the minister share that with us? As well, how long are we planning to stay there? Is that where we are going to be situated?

I would finish off by saying that I do have to intervene when the minister says that we on this side, the NDP, are only concerned about climate change. Let us be honest. We were not saying that someone on a hunger strike who is representing the Philippines would have stopped. I think he would appreciate that.

In the spirit of this debate about sharing best ideas and putting forward ideas, I would hope the minister is not going to go down that path. We were simply mentioning that someone was on a hunger strike. There is a climate change conference on. We think it is part of the equation here. My colleague was simply referring to a representative of the Philippines who made the comment in Toronto. He is someone we work with and have good diplomatic relations with.

I know we have a different point of view on climate change. The government does not believe it is as important as we might; however, let us try to put that aside. I think the minister was implying that somehow we thought that just supporting someone on a hunger strike in this case was enough. Clearly that is not the case. We have all donated. We are supporting the government on its donations. I would just like to try to shift us back to that spirit of the debate.

**Mr. Chris Alexander:** Mr. Chair, we on this side do believe that climate change is an important issue. We do believe global warming is an important issue. We are the first government in Canadian history to reduce greenhouse emissions. We do not often get credit from the opposition for doing this.

However, on a day when hundreds of thousands, probably millions, are still in need in the Philippines, as in hungry, we need to be focusing on their needs. That is why we are on the island of Panay. That is why we went to Iloilo. That is why we are in that province and the province of Capiz.

*Government Orders*

We are there at the request of the Filipino government. We were congratulated on Monday in Toronto by the same consul general that the member mentioned when the Prime Minister had his meeting with the community at one of their most important churches in the greater Toronto area, Our Lady of the Assumption.

We have gone, again, as is typical for Canada, to a part of a country affected by a disaster where no one else was able to go. Tacloban was on television early on. It got a lot of response. The north part of Panay is very bad. We are proud to be there with our logistics, with our impressive footprint, dealing with equally dire needs.

As the member knows, the typhoon went from east to west across the middle of the Philippines, from Eastern Visayas to Western Visayas. Three big islands were in its path: Leyte, where Tacloban is; Cebu, in the middle, where we have a visa application centre and where we are giving additional access for people who may need that expedited priority processing; and Panay, a very big island, with the city of Roxas in the north, which is not in good shape.

• (2125)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I care for and will always be an advocate for the Philippines. I care passionately about the Philippines, which is one of the reasons I raised the issue earlier this week within my own caucus of the need to have an emergency debate on this situation. I was glad to see we were able to work it through to have the take note debate so that members can participate and express what they feel is appropriate.

I want to keep this discussion as apolitical as possible. What is happening in the Philippines is tragic. It has killed thousands of people. It has destroyed thousands of homes. Hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced. Hundreds of thousands of Canadians of Filipino heritage have been directly affected.

There is so much that we can do. We need to give the government credit where it has taken action. We need to allow for ideas to flow from our communities to Ottawa, to the Hill, and support the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration with things he may be able to do.

When I sat down with the leader of the Liberal Party inside the Philippines Centre in Winnipeg, Manitoba, we met with members. One of the ideas that came out of that meeting was to recognize the thousands of individuals who are currently here studying, working, and visiting from the Philippines, many of whom are from the area that has been so much affected.

Is it not fair for Canada's Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to make a general statement that in those situations, he is prepared to say that they do not have to worry about getting the extension and that we will be allowing for those extensions, given the circumstances. In other words, we do not want to send a parent, for example, back home to an area where their home no longer exists. Can we not speed up the processing? We could talk about that.

However, in addition to that last comment, the question I have for the minister is this: to what degree has the department sent extra staff to accommodate or to assist in expediting, or when can we anticipate that will take place? As one of my colleagues has pointed out, could

he tell us the number of people who have been sent out to the Philippines?

**Mr. Chris Alexander:** Mr. Chair, I thank the member for the question and the suggestion. It is one we took up in the very early days of our response to this crisis. It is worth repeating tonight that in addition to expedited processing for applications of people from the affected areas, we are prepared to review study permits and work permits of those who are already here in a compassionate and flexible manner to make sure we are not sending anyone back to a situation that is absolutely impossible for them to cope with and places an additional burden on authorities and families that are trying to respond to the great need there.

Let us keep in mind that we have an enormous community of Filipinos who are not yet permanent residents, who are not yet citizens, who are studying or working as caregivers or working as temporary foreign workers in other fields, and they are encouraged to stay. If their permits are coming up soon, we want to review them in a flexible and compassionate manner, and they are increasingly at the basis of our immigration.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Staff?

**Mr. Chris Alexander:** Mr. Chair, immigration flows from the Philippines. These are some of the candidates we tend to take as permanent residents after a certain point.

On staff, we have the third-largest mission in the embassy in Manila. Our embassy is functioning properly.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Extra staff? Nada.

**Mr. Chris Alexander:** Mr. Chair, whatever we may hear being shouted by one of the members opposite, it is important to focus on the fact that is an extremely capable—

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** How much extra staff are you sending over?

**Hon. Chris Alexander:** Mr. Chair, is there no limit?

• (2130)

**The Deputy Chair:** The hon. minister has the floor.

**Mr. Chris Alexander:** Mr. Chair, it is very difficult to concentrate during such interruptions at such high octave levels. We are used to it from that particular member, but in this kind of context, one would think it would be kept in check, even by him.

Our team is capable of prioritizing applications as needed. They are capable of continuing to work on the huge workload we have from Manila every year. They have been reinforced by some additional resources that came before the DART to try to organize our entire response, including consular resources to look after Canadians, some of whom are still missing, and we will continue to redeploy resources as required to make sure we are giving the best possible response in this case.

*Government Orders*

What we will not do is let ourselves be diverted by side issues. It was the member for Markham—Unionville who spent a large part of his speech talking about waiting times for family reunification and the general immigration program. That really is not relevant to the needs of people in the Philippines. Question period is there for that. The member for Markham—Unionville usually gets his facts wrong, so we will correct him next time, but let us not eat up time in a precious debate like this. The Filipino Canadian community is watching and worrying about our ability to focus on their urgent needs while members try to score partisan points, and really fail to do so, just as the member for Markham—Unionville has failed to do several times tonight.

**Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I will be sharing my time with the member for Scarborough—Rouge River.

This typhoon was the strongest storm in recorded history to make landfall, with winds reaching 315 kilometres an hour. It is an enormous disaster, and I appreciate the minister's comments that there have been extra resources placed in the Philippines to handle visa applications, because I know from conversations with people in my riding that this is one of the things they are concerned about. People need to know they can be reunited with family members who have no place to live and want to come to Canada, maybe temporarily, maybe permanently. It is good to know there are extra resources on the ground. I did not get to ask him exactly how many resources are on the ground, but maybe he could answer that in one of his comments after my speech.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** There's none.

**Mr. Chris Alexander:** Have another drink, Jimmy.

**Mr. Mike Sullivan:** Mr. Chair, according to the Philippine government, there were 4,000 people killed by the typhoon, 18,000 injured and a whole lot of people still missing. The minister suggested there are some Canadians still missing. I wonder if the minister in his comments could let us know if they have identified those Canadians who are still missing.

It is a tragedy that affects all of us.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Mr. Chair, I rise on a point of order.

I just want the minister to apologize for shouting, "Have another drink". I have been after him, and maybe I've been a little vocal tonight, to put on record how much extra staff he sent to the Philippines. We have not heard that. When the tsunami happened, 13 extra staff members went to Sri Lanka.

Everyone knows my record. I do not drink. He should stand up and apologize, if he has the guts.

**Mr. Chris Alexander:** Mr. Chair, on the point of order, I gave a speech and there was time for questions. There was no question posed by the member for Scarborough—Agincourt. Instead, he heckled me mercilessly at a very high decibel level, making it hard to give a speech, which in a relatively late sitting of the House is inappropriate. Given all the inappropriate things he said tonight, I do not think any of us in the House will apologize for anything we have said back to him in self-defence.

●(2135)

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Mr. Chair, I will not take this from the minister, but you can rule. If the minister wants to repeat it outside this chamber, to tell me to have a drink, I assure you he will have a lawsuit on his hands that will make his head totally spin.

**The Deputy Chair:** The Chair will review whether there is something that was inappropriate and return to the House, if it is necessary.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for York—South Weston.

**Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP):** Mr. Chair, there are 600,000 Filipinos living in Canada, nearly half in the Greater Toronto Area, and of that number there are 6,000 in my riding of York South—Weston. Many of them are very worried about what has happened in their community and what communications they can expect from that community. They are actually quite grateful for the government's matching funding. However, it is unfortunate that it is such a short period of time, because it does take some time to organize the funding to be matched.

On Saturday, I will be participating in an event to raise money at the Iglesia ni Cristo Congregation in Mount Dennis in my riding. Our hearts go out to the victims of this disaster.

I urge the government to consider extending the matching funds time beyond December 9. I am aware of fundraising for Haiti that went on well beyond the period of time that was set aside by the government. I understand there needs to be some closure on it, but it would be easier on these communities if they were given more time to organize themselves around fundraising in order to access the matching funds from the government; although we do appreciate the fact that there are matching funds from the government.

I know the minister did not like the fact that this was brought up, but I will comment on the series of natural disasters on this planet in the past few years: Katrina, Sandy, the snow storms in Europe, the recent flooding in Alberta, the flooding in Toronto and, just last Sunday, a series of tornadoes in November in the United States, which caused a tremendous amount of damage.

I am not suggesting for a moment that there is some reason in a take note debate to ascribe blame in some fashion to anyone or anything, but I would note that the world is watching as these storms become more frequent and more dangerous. It is something for which Canada and every government in the world has to be prepared. We have to be paying attention to the fact that these things are becoming more difficult.

The City of Toronto has asked the Government of Canada for assistance in infrastructure spending to prepare itself for future storms such as the one that happened on July 8 of this year, which caused \$1 billion of damage in the city of Toronto alone. So far the response from the government has been to say no.

We must take stronger preventive action to prepare ourselves for natural disasters, the likes of which many of us have never even imagined. It has happened in the Philippines and it can happen anywhere in the world, and it would appear it is happening with much more frequency.

*Government Orders*

I will close by saying that I too want to thank the members of the disaster team from the Canadian military who have gone to the Philippines. They make Canada proud every time they are sent out. I want to thank every one of them for the work they are doing and the selflessness with which they leave Canada and go into a disaster area.

**Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague for his comments and especially for his good wishes to our DART team and the things it is doing.

As members of Parliament, we have the opportunity to help in our communities. The member talked about a fundraiser that is going on. I wonder if there is some way he is participating in helping to get that message out and if that is a message we can take to the rest of our colleagues in this House.

**Mr. Mike Sullivan:** Mr. Chair, in fact I am taking that message out to my entire community.

All members of Parliament have tremendous communication tools, but one of the difficulties is the time frame. The December 9 deadline does not allow us the time to send mail out to the riding to advise of the necessity of fundraising.

It is fairly well known in the public, but I am going to make as much use of my communication tools as I can to make sure as many people as possible are aware of the fundraising that is going on this weekend and, generally, that the government is matching funds.

• (2140)

**Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Chair, just to clarify, yes, human resources; Canadian government presence in the Philippines has been reinforced. It is mostly, obviously, on the military side and the consular side because there was an acute need there to track Canadians, many of them still missing. That role is not a particularly large one in normal times in the Philippines. Our immigration program is a large one, one of the largest we have in the world. It is being adjusted. It is being supported, but it is handling prioritized cases within its already very large workload quite well.

There was a very important point made by the member opposite about the future for the Philippines and other countries. Would the member not agree with us that the best investment that can be made with the support of donor countries, but also by countries subject to typhoons and earthquakes and other natural disasters themselves, is to build that resilience, to build that ability to respond quickly and to prevent the kind of damage that is much worse when preparations have not been made?

Of course it takes resources. Of course it has to be done over the long term, but this has to be part of the development process, surely, in parts of the world that are subject to these acute and intense climatic phenomena like the typhoon we saw in the Philippines. Is that not something we should all work on together?

**Mr. Mike Sullivan:** Mr. Chair, absolutely, I must agree, and I am glad the member opposite has agreed with me that preparation is important. Climate change adaptation is the term that has been used by the government and by others. Part of that is recognizing it, not

just in developing countries or in far-flung places in the world, but right here in Canada.

In Alberta, in Toronto and in Mississauga there were effects of storms this summer that were unthinkable, and they clearly displayed that some parts of this country are not prepared for the worst-case scenario and for the scenarios we likely are going to see more of, as a result of global climate change.

We welcome the government responding “yes” when the City of Toronto asks it for help with infrastructure spending in order to prevent the kind of property damage that occurred because its sewer systems could not handle the rain that fell in this last storm. However, in addition, funding assistance and best practices to developing countries or to countries where infrastructure is weak or unable to withstand the kinds of devastation that have come from this typhoon are another welcome goal that Canada can set for itself in its role in the world.

**Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I would have liked to have asked the minister something along these lines. I think the preventive theme that is being discussed here is really quite important. Without branching out to prevention more generally, would the member be as interested as I am in knowing from the government whether or not discussions may be already under way about what kind of co-operation Canada is prepared to give or work on with the Philippines when it comes to prevention for the future?

One of the biggest concerns I hear is that we know that the Philippines of late has been subject to more and more typhoons. We know it is extremely vulnerable. The indomitable spirit of the Filipinos that is actually famous and renowned around the world is only going to take them so far, without help from us. If we are really the friends we say we are, I am hoping that these discussions are already starting.

**Mr. Mike Sullivan:** Mr. Chair, I would welcome a more fulsome answer from the government on its long-term strategy for helping the Philippine government develop and redevelop itself and would love to hear that answer from him.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I am humbled to be able to join in this debate tonight and know that it is a very important debate for many of the constituents of Scarborough—Rouge River. As my colleague from York South—Weston mentioned, about 300,000 Canadians of Filipino descent are in the greater Toronto area, and about 10,000 of them are in Scarborough—Rouge River. My heart goes out to all my constituents who have family members and friends living in the Philippines, as do I. Know that I have many friends and people who have become like family for me living in the Philippines and are dealing with the aftermath of Typhoon Haiyan, as we call it, or Yolanda, as they call it in the Philippines.

This typhoon has displaced more people than the tsunami of the Indian Ocean and Hurricane Katrina put together. More than 500,000 homes have been completely destroyed by this typhoon, and we know that at least 13 million people have been affected throughout the Philippines.



*Government Orders*

I am very grateful and want to, first and foremost, thank every single person who has taken immediate action to make sure that we are doing what we can as civil society members to support our friends and family and our global colleagues, our global citizens in the Philippines, who have been affected by this natural disaster.

I want to share with members an email I received from Lory Grace Bautista, who is a constituent who lives in Scarborough. She was very nervous and very concerned about what was happening and how her family in Aklan province, on the Panay island were. She was worried that the Panay island was not getting as much support in the Panay region as many of the other people were. She was very grateful that our government had deployed the DART team and is very grateful for the support we are seeing here in Canada from everywhere. She was really hoping that we would extend our operations to Aklan province and other provinces, such as Antique and Capiz.

I am happy to let Ms. Bautista know that our DART team has been sent to the Panay island. It is very good to know that I can write back to Ms. Bautista to tell her that we have been able to do what she is asking and what many other people have been asking.

● (2145)

My colleague mentioned the fundraiser he is going to. Just a week ago, I met with MANET, the Ministerial Association of North-East Toronto. This is an association that brings many congregations of different faiths together. We sat there, around a table, to figure out how we could work together to do our own community fundraising to send money back to the Philippines to help with the aid efforts everybody around the world is doing.

I was in conversation with Migrante Canada, as well, about the work it is doing nationally here in Canada to raise money, and I want to thank everybody who is doing that.

I also need to thank our government for the quick response we have seen with the monetary commitment, the initial commitment of \$5 million and the further commitment of matching funds. I am a fan of giving credit where credit is due. With the donations from Canadians, the matching to date is at \$15 million. That is fantastic news, because that is money that is very much needed on the ground in the Philippines.

I am a very big fan of DART and personally know the benefits of DART. I want to thank each and every single member of the DART team for the work they do and thank our members, our Prime Minister, and our ministers, whoever was involved in making that quick decision to send the DART team out. We know that the sooner DART is on the ground, the positive response from the communities becomes exponentially better.

● (2150)

**Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I want to thank my colleague from Scarborough—Rouge River for her comments tonight. It is important that we have these respectable debates and talk about the issues that are important. She mentioned how important the donations are right now and how important it is that we get boots on the ground as quickly as we did. I want to let her know that I appreciate her acknowledgment of all the efforts of the government.

My colleague also talked about how people in the Canadian Filipino community have been active in fundraising and addressing the needs in the terrible tragedy that we are seeing in the Philippines. I hope she can also speak to the broader audience, to all Canadians. We need every Canadian to get out and raise money and find those dollars. I know that we are going into the Christmas season, and people have other priorities. Sooner or later, the news will change the channel again, and we will not be listening to what is happening with the ongoing human crisis taking place in the Philippines. If we can continue to encourage Canadians from coast to coast to continue to donate until December 8, that is something we want to continue to work collaboratively on.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Mr. Chair, I agree with what the parliamentary secretary mentioned. That is the same point I made. When I spoke about the Ministerial Association of North-East Toronto, it is all the northeast Toronto faith groups that are coming together, not just Canadians of Filipino descent. It is congregations of people in our community in northeast Toronto who are coming together to help.

The parliamentary secretary spoke about Christmas coming and that the priorities of people may be changing. Being a Hindu, my understanding of Christmas is that it is about love and giving. That is what we are seeing here and is exactly what we need. We need people to open their hearts just a bit more and maybe dig a little deeper into their pockets. When we do not have much is when we give more. If we look at statistics, it is people who do not have much who give the most.

I ask all Canadians to dig a bit deeper and look to how they can help with this horrendous crisis that is affecting human lives. The rebuilding will not be easy or quick. Canada will need to coordinate with the Philippines government in its rebuilding efforts. However, before we can start rebuilding, we need to make sure that we have enough right now for the people who are affected to sustain life and move forward. In order for that to happen, we need to make sure that we are all working together collectively in this country to give.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, my colleague's speech was heartfelt. The UN has reported that nearly half the health facilities in four affected regions remain closed. I am wondering if she could talk about the health impacts, the needs of our mothers and our children, and what steps the government could be taking to help.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan:** Mr. Chair, I thank the hon. member for Etobicoke for her question and for always focusing on health impacts in our communities and around the world.

The UN has had to close down four centres of health care provision. People in these areas will need emergency medical assistance. If centres of health care provision have to be shut down, we know it will exacerbate the situation even further.

I am just coming from a meeting where I was hosting a dialogue on early and forced marriages. I learned that one of the health care workers who was helping in that situation has also lost her life in the Philippines because of Yolanda. It further exacerbates the situation when health care workers and medical facilities are lost in this disaster, this crisis, this tragedy.

*Government Orders*

• (2155)

**Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I am pleased to be able to participate in this very serious debate tonight. As all of our speakers have already stated, our thoughts and prayers are with everyone in the Philippines. Our encouragement goes out to those who are reaching out and providing humanitarian assistance in the Philippines, as well as those here in Canada who are still missing family members or have not heard from them because of communication lines telephone lines and other infrastructure being destroyed by Typhoon Haiyan. It is important that we continue to keep them in our thoughts and prayers as they still struggle with knowing how their families are coping during this time.

I want to use my time tonight to talk about the very quick response to last week's typhoon by the Department of National Defence and our Canadian Armed Forces. This is a story of profound and terrible loss. We are talking about people's lives, their homes, infrastructure, and livelihoods. We have already talked about entire crops being wiped out. Much of the Philippines is an agrarian society, with people living off the land. If we quietly considered the despair we would feel if this happened to us right here in Canada or to our families, all of us could truly understand the despair and grief in the Philippines today.

Our natural instinct in times of crisis and times of danger like this, when there is storm of this magnitude bearing down on us, is to run and get cover. We have citizens in our country who do the exact opposite. Of course, I am speaking of the brave men and women who serve in the Canadian Armed Forces as part of our Disaster Assistance Response Team, DART. Sure, they are military members of the Canadian Armed Forces, the Air Force, and the Royal Canadian Navy. These are soldiers, but they are armed with shovels, water, smiles, and medicine. They are going out there proudly wearing the maple leaf on their uniforms as a unit crest. It is a simple yet poignant motto on the uniform that says "Humanitas".

Just a week ago, these members were sitting in their homes, unaware that they were going to be called. It really is a credit to the training, expertise, and readiness of the Canadian Armed Forces that it is always in a position to deploy the DART team. Now they are sitting in the middle of a major disaster zone, but they are bringing much needed help and assistance to Panay Island in the Philippines.

We all know that the story of DART is an important one. It is a story that all of us as Canadians are justifiably proud of. DART has proven time and time again that it can make a crucial difference in people's lives around the world. It does this by offering medical aid, engineering, logistical support, and of course, safe drinking water, the basis of healthy human life. DART can act as a stabilization resource immediately after an emergency. That is exactly what we are seeing. This way, it is bridging the gap between the disaster that has already hit hard and the arrival of civilian actors, NGOs, and those who are in the business of dealing with humanitarian aid and will be there to provide the long-term assistance that will be so desperately needed in the recovery from Typhoon Haiyan.

DART works alongside local authorities, first and foremost, non-governmental organizations from around the world, and international

agencies, such as the United Nations. They will be there until regular services are able to be restored by the local governments.

• (2200)

Canadians and the international community have seen the great work of DART many times already. For example, in 2010, when Haiti was hit by the devastating earthquake, the Canadian Armed Forces had boots on the ground in less than 24 hours after the disaster. That included search and rescue personnel, medics and firefighters, and they were all directly helping the people in Haiti.

We have learned many lessons from the previous demanding missions, realizing just how important and challenging a rapid deployment is. We have been maintaining a flexible and rapid response capability and we know that is critical to the success of disaster relief operations where every few hours can save thousands of lives.

People are watching the TV right now and seeing all the different reports coming in. They know that when there are corpses still being collected and livestock carcasses laying all around, those situations are not only disease potential vectors, but also can cause contamination of the water source. We have to ensure that all of this gets cleaned up, that the infrastructure gets restored as quickly as possible and that the water is purified to ensure the sustainability of people's lives.

It is thanks to all the lessons that we have learned for the readiness, the training, the expertise of our people, as well as our equipment, as the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has already talked about. The Canadian Armed Forces are now set to answer the call for help whenever it comes and they are proving it right now in the Philippines.

The first step was for the military to deploy to the Philippines as part of the Government of Canada's assessment team. It was on the ground very quickly, understood immediately what the needs were and started working with the Philippine government to determine where our DART capabilities were best going to be used. We responded quickly and got our resources into our area of focus, which is Panay Island. Since then, we have opened our headquarters in the city of Roxas, with operations focusing on the northeast coast of the island, an area that was in the direct path of the typhoon, an area that is still not accessible by road, an area where much of the country has yet to pay any attention because of all the other devastation in other parts of the Philippines. What we are seeing on TV, of course, is Tacloban.

*Government Orders*

There are already over 300 members of the Canadian Armed Forces on the ground and this is all part of the DART. These are people with medical expertise, doctors, nurses and medics. There is logistical support and engineers, who are very important for restoring the infrastructure. We are using C-17 Globemasters and 150 Polaris aircraft. They are doing the strategic heavy lifting, getting personnel and equipment into the Philippines, which is over half the world away, over 16,000 kilometres. There are two Griffon helicopters that have already been deployed. Part of the team was able to fly in and give us mobility to get to the parts of Panay Island that we would not be able to get to otherwise. They are getting in before the roads are cleared. A third helicopter is actually slated to arrive later tonight.

The work that our military personnel have been able to accomplish so far is quite impressive. We have a reverse osmosis water purification unit that has been installed and tested, and that will start providing purified water very shortly. A second unit is in transit right now. These water purification units will provide up to 50,000 litres of drinking water every day. That is going to make a difference in the lives of many people affected by this disaster.

Our men in uniform are also doing other important work, such as clearing the roads between different cities on the island and allowing vital transportation routes to reopen. They have already reopened 36 kilometres. They have also installed and repaired the generator in the hospital in Roxas so they can immediately start doing surgeries. We know that hospital has already been able to handle patients. As well, the medical team has already seen over 400 patients since it arrived.

This is what is really important. There is still much work to be done, but with its equipment, training and experience, DART is in its element, working with the authorities of the Philippines and our international partners, like the UN, to ensure that the help we provide meets the needs of the people of the Philippines.

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):**

*[Member spoke in Tagalog as follows:]*

*[Mabuhay ang Pilipinas.]*

Long live the Philippines.

Mr. Chair, I think all of us as members of Parliament in the House of Commons join together to speak with Filipino Canadians from across the country, from coast to coast and indeed with all those around the world who have been very concerned by the tragic events that took place just a few days ago.

I would like to particularly speak, through you, Mr. Speaker, to the community in Burnaby—New Westminster, the Filipino Canadians who are mobilizing across the Lower Mainland and many other residents in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia who are mobilizing right now to provide support.

This is the time given the fact that the aid needs to be delivered now to the victims of super Typhoon Haiyan. This is also the time, because the government is matching those funds, for the communities to mobilize.

We support the government in its rapid response to what the official opposition, NDP and so many Canadians across the country

said needed to be done, an immediate response. The government has reacted promptly and this is extremely important.

We also know that this is a new class of super typhoon, and that Canada needs to engage with other countries. Once we have moved from burying the dead, feeding the hungry, giving aid to the injured and rebuilding the Philippines, internationally we have to work so that this type of super typhoon does not come again.

I would like to say again:

*[Mabuhay ang Pilipinas.]*

Long live the Philippines.

I hope the member joins with me in this.

• (2205)

**Mr. James Bezan:** Mr. Chair, I want to thank my colleague from Burnaby—New Westminster for his comments.

Manitoba is home to one of the largest Canadian Filipino communities, including in Selkirk—Interlake. Our hearts and prayers are with them and their families and the work they are on relief efforts in the Philippines.

We are fortunate that we have such a great Canadian Armed Forces. The members of the DART are first-class citizens of our country, the best of the best. They are over there representing us well.

Panay Island has had a fairly significant Canadian footprint over time because of the work of CIDA. There have been lots of projects done in the area. It is an island that is only about the size of Cape Breton Island, with over four million people. These people have a great need.

Our military is very happy to go there and support those four million people who have been so devastated by Typhoon Haiyan.

One of the things that made it possible for us to get there quickly is our strategic lift. We purchased the C-17 Globemasters and now we can move troops and equipment very rapidly. We just proved that.

We were actually the second major country to go in there. We did not have logistical capabilities, like the United States, which is mainly focusing where the typhoon made landfall in Tacloban.

The United States has resources at Guam. It has a base in Okinawa, Japan. Both are only three or four hours away. The U.S. was able to move marines and equipment in.

We are moving equipment and personnel over 16,000 kilometres. It is an amazing accomplishment. We have a bigger presence there than the majority of countries.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I want to confirm two things.

I understand that any money spent on DART or DART operations or payment to the personnel will be above and beyond what has already been promised. I think we heard assurance from the parliamentary secretary that this has happened, but I do want to hear it again.

*Government Orders*

I also want to confirm that the minister sitting beside him has not confirmed to us that there will be additional personnel, immigration personnel, at the embassy helping with the processing of visitor visas, family cases. If the member could confirm those two things, it would be greatly appreciated.

• (2210)

**Mr. James Bezan:** Mr. Chair, I can tell the member there is sufficient personnel at the embassy in Manila handling the citizenship claims. I can also tell him that we still have not done an accounting of what our deployment of the DART to the Philippines has cost. However, everything that is a direct cost of moving our troops over there, putting DART on the ground and having those boots on the ground to help the people of the Philippines, will be accounted for above and beyond all the contributions the government has already dedicated itself to, as well as the matching donations that will be made by Canadians up until December 8.

Again, I want to encourage everyone across the country, in the spirit of Christmas, Diwali and Hanukkah and all the other major holiday festivities that are coming up in the next month or so, during this time of giving, this is a time to remember those in need, and there is no greater need than what we see in the Philippines.

**Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Chair, we join our colleagues opposite in saying *mabuhay ang Pilipinas*. Our thoughts are with the affected people, those who are victims of this typhoon as well as their friends and families and those most in need.

I am grateful to my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, for correcting my pronunciation. It must have been the late hour, but I was calling the island that the Canadian Forces is on by a different name. It is actually Panay.

Let us recall why we are here. It is to continue that projection of Canadian expertise and resources to those in need. The Canadian Forces are doing it. We are doing it through our immigration programs, through Canadian development assistance and humanitarian relief.

Would the parliamentary secretary agree with me though that as Canadians look to channel their generosity, in the spirit of Christmas, Hanukkah, Diwali, et cetera, that one of the ways for them to have the greatest impact is not to send that can of food or that clothing, which itself has a huge logistical cost associated with it, but to give generously to humanitarian agencies that have a proven record? The Canadian Red Cross, CARE Canada, World Vision and others are on the ground and have proven networks that can translate those funds into an immediate impact on the lives of people who still have not been reached.

**Mr. James Bezan:** Mr. Chair, it has been said before, money is the best donation. It does not cost anything to send it. One can send it by wire and it gets over there. Then people can buy the food, the clothing and the supplies from the local economy. When they bring in canned goods, clothing, or other consumer needs, they are actually depressing the local economy. This way people will be able to help those who are not now going to have many business opportunities because everyone is so busy rebuilding.

Pretty much everyone there lived from paycheque to paycheque and at very low salaries at that. Therefore, it is important that we support the local farmers, local shops and that we get those goods, supplies and food stocks into the hands of those who need them.

The best way to do that is to work through major organizations like World Vision, the Red Cross, UNICEF, United Way and Mennonite Central Committee. I know there are so many others that are active right now in collecting those dollars. They have the expertise and the knowledge of dealing with humanitarian crises around the world. They will ensure that those dollars are used the most efficiently and to the benefit of the local economy and of course in delivering the needed aid and food that the people so desperately need.

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I am very happy to participate in this important debate this evening on the crisis in the Philippines.

Typhoon Haiyan, or Yolanda, has had an absolutely devastating effect on Filipinos. As we understand, it has displaced an estimated four million people, which is more than those displaced by the Indian Ocean tsunami and Hurricane Katrina combined, with more than half a million homes completely destroyed. It is our understanding that at least 13 million people have been affected throughout the Philippines, with over 4,000 people estimated to have died, 18,000 injured and 16,000 people still missing.

I want to begin my comments this evening by extending my sincere sympathies to all those affected, obviously the Filipino population who have been so devastated by this terrible event, but also the many friends and family members and colleagues around the world who have been affected as well. It has created terrible uncertainty, terrible worry, and it has also mobilized people around the world to act as quickly as possible.

I want to especially extend sympathies to the Filipino community in my riding of Parkdale—High Park. I have reached out to the community centre, to Kababayan Multicultural Centre, which is the heart of the Filipino community in Parkdale—High Park. I know it has served many newcomers of Filipino descent to our area, and today continues to work with those Canadians of Filipino descent, including seniors and young people as well as other community members needing assistance. The people at the community centre perform wonderful work in services, language training and job help. I want to specifically offer to the executive director, Flordeliz Dandal, with whom I have worked so often in the community, and all of the staff and volunteers and to Aguido Dela Cruz, the chairperson of the board, and to all the board members and all members of the Filipino community, my sincere sympathies.

I did have the opportunity last week to meet briefly with the ambassador from the Philippines. I asked him what we as members of Parliament can do. He encouraged us to encourage people to donate, to contribute funds so we can get aid as quickly as possible to those affected. I went this week to the embassy here in Ottawa and signed a book of condolences that the ambassador is compiling and will be sent to the Filipino Canadian community.

*Government Orders*

I note that the international community has pulled together quite quickly to work to provide aid for relief efforts, and the international aid commitment so far has reached nearly \$248 million. In addition, the Asian Development Bank and the World Bank have readied \$500 million in loans to help finance the reconstruction, because of course reconstruction will be enormous once the immediate needs of people in terms of water, food, shelter and clothing have been taken care of. Canada's commitment of \$20 million so far, including \$15 million to match funds that have been donated by Canadians, as well as mobilizing relief efforts and our DART members to provide direct assistance is extremely welcome. We thank the government for this very quick action.

● (2215)

I want to hit home to people who are listening from our community in Parkdale—High Park, or anywhere in the Toronto area, or indeed across Canada. We have an opportunity right now to secure matching funds from the federal government. We applaud this initiative, so the best relief, the best initiative that people can offer is to donate so that the money can get quickly translated into relief and aid on the ground.

There are a number of fundraising initiatives taking place in local communities. People can donate online through organizations such as Migrante Canada, which does such terrific work with caregivers from the Filipino community. They can work through Kababayan in Parkdale—High Park, or people can donate directly to humanitarian organizations, the Humanitarian Coalition, the Canadian Red Cross, World Vision, UNICEF, whatever their preferred recognized charity is that knows how to translate this money quickly into action on the ground.

I also note one specific event in which I am going to be participating in a couple of weeks. It is being organized by Long & McQuade Musical Instruments in Toronto. There is a singing contest with John Santos and we are going to be singing to raise funds for the victims of Typhoon Haiyan. That is Friday, December 6, at Casa Da Madeira Community Centre on Dupont Street in Toronto.

One further point I would like to make is that this typhoon was especially hard-hitting for the Filipino community because so many people of Filipino origin in Canada, and indeed in other countries around the world, are separated from families back home. Many people of Filipino origin have come here to Canada to work as caregivers in people's homes, or in the health care sector. Often these are people who have left their own families and children behind. They have missed milestones in their children's lives because they may be caring for other people's children. That presents its own special hardship, but when they are separated and something disastrous happens such as this typhoon, it is especially gut-wrenching for people separated from their loved ones.

Many who come here to Canada want to sponsor family members. We meet with people from the Filipino community in our constituency office regularly. They are trying to sponsor family members and it is a very long wait. This has an even bigger impact on them.

In addition to urging people to donate so that we can get matching funds from the federal government, I would also urge the federal government to do what it can to speed up family reunification,

applications for permanent residence, the immigration process, so that people who are separated from family members can be reunited and be assured that their loved ones are safe and sound.

With that I welcome any questions or comments from my colleagues in the House.

● (2220)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, it is important for us to acknowledge the effort that Canadians from coast to coast are making. It goes well beyond just individuals of Filipino heritage.

Last week, for example, I went to the local McDonald's and saw a little tin cup asking for donations. Carte International, a wonderful company where a lot of people with Filipino heritage work, gave my office a call because it wanted to have a Philippine flag on its float for the Santa Claus parade. The company raised thousands of dollars the previous night for a social. We had groups that were there for prayer services at numerous churches within the community. We had senior groups getting together and soliciting donations. The Association of Ilocano of Manitoba had a giant fundraiser where a great deal of money was made, all to try to help. It has touched the hearts of all Canadians in some fashion or another.

As we reflect on it here this evening, we should emphasize that it is so wonderful to see Canadians as a whole coming together to support another great nation. It is a nation with which we have been building a healthier and more prosperous relationship over the last number of years, a relationship that deals with more than immigration. It hopes to build more in terms of trade and so forth, and to help both countries. This is why I am very proud to say that when we see this, what we really see is one country, a friend in need, and Canada rising to be there for its friend, the Philippines, in a wonderful and masterful way.

Does the member want to make a general comment with regard to the overwhelming response that Canadians are providing in this time of need for our true friend, the Philippines?

● (2225)

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** Mr. Chair, he is quite right. There is a special connection between Canadians and Filipinos. We have seen it, partly because of the nature of this crisis, which is such a horrible and devastating catastrophe that has happened to people who, in so many ways, had so little to begin with.

Because there is that close connection with people from the Philippines and because there are so many Canadians of Filipino origin, there is a special bond. There is an outpouring of sympathy and concern, as well as genuine, altruistic support and people wanting to help in whatever way possible. So many people have donated through many organizations. We see so many grassroots initiatives coming up from various communities to raise money in a genuinely selfless way to try to help people as quickly as possible.

*Government Orders*

I just want to note that I think the government has acted quickly. Rebecca Davies, from the Canadian branch of Doctors Without Borders, has said that “The key to saving lives in emergencies is speed”. The rapidity of our response here in Canada has been quite significant, yet many of those who are affected need additional support. For example, women and children need support to protect them from violence, trafficking or exploitation as a result of the catastrophe.

There needs to be a special effort for those who are particularly in need of special care. I know that UN humanitarian coordinator, Valerie Amos, has highlighted that particular need in this situation.

**Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I appreciate my hon. colleague's comments tonight. As we have heard from so many who have spoken to the need, my colleague spoke about her meetings this past week with the ambassador and other officials from the Philippines, working here in Canada.

Clearly, the government is reacting, but we are hearing from these officials. I had the opportunity last week to meet with a number of people within the Catholic community, who said that they just cannot handle any more of the hard supplies and gifts, or the outpouring of foodstuffs that is being shipped over. They need money to be contributed to the various agencies that can deliver much more efficiently and effectively with cash by putting it to work in a hurry in the Philippines.

Could my colleague just confirm whether, in her meetings over the past week, she is hearing the very same thing?

• (2230)

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** Yes, Mr. Chair, the difficulty sometimes with physical donations, physical goods, is that they can be difficult to transport and it is difficult to get the particular goods to those who need those specific goods, so the most effective way to transmit aid is with financial donations.

For anyone who has concerns whether the money is getting to where it is supposed to go, there are recognized, reputable, reliable, experienced, humanitarian agencies that are on the ground. I did name some of these earlier, but just let me repeat: the Humanitarian Coalition, Canadian Red Cross, World Vision, UNICEF. These are just some of them.

I certainly do not want to exclude other agencies that do an excellent job, but especially because the federal government is matching financial donations until the first week of December, it is desirable that people donate now so that the money can get as quickly as possible to those in need.

**Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I very much appreciate the comments from my colleague from Parkdale—High Park.

I want to go back to one of her last comments about local organizations and link it a bit to what the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration had to say when he talked about the need in the future to be helping build resilience. I go back as well to my own worry that these typhoons will not necessarily be the exception, that we may continue to see more typhoons, maybe more strong typhoons of this nature, and we may be called upon again to play the role that is happening right now.

As I was talking to the ambassador for the Philippines yesterday, we talked about a central trait that I have discovered in so many individuals from the Philippines, which is their immensely positive outlook along with their sense of perseverance and indomitable spirit.

I am wondering if my colleague is seeing in her own community the beginnings of a community reaction on which we can build to sustain for the future. I do not want to be pessimistic about the fact that the future will again call on us to play this kind of role, but I am hoping that out of this we can have local Filipino communities, along with the broader Canadian community, even readier than we have been this time. Does she see any signs that would be possible?

**Ms. Peggy Nash:** Mr. Chair, I think at this moment people are focused on the immediate need, although my colleague's question is an excellent one.

It is one thing to put out fires, but what we need is good fire prevention and good fire safety measures. I think that is what he is talking about.

The Filipino Canadian community is a very positive, a very caring community, a community that is very united, and people have a very strong network.

Getting past the immediate tragedy and building resilience for the future is something to which people will turn their minds. If any community can do it, I believe the Filipino Canadian community can, and perhaps we can learn some lessons that will apply to other situations of similar urgency.

**Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I rise in the House this evening to speak to our government's efficient and successful response to Typhoon Haiyan.

Before I begin, however, I would like to offer my condolences to all those who have been affected by this disaster. They do remain in my thoughts and prayers.

The images we are seeing on a daily basis and the stories of the victims as well as those of their families here in Canada are heart wrenching. The destruction of lives, livelihoods and infrastructure is staggering. General estimates are that the number of those affected is between 10 million and 13 million people in nine regions and that nearly 40% of those affected are from central Visayas.

The UN estimates that some 2.5 million people are in dire need of food assistance. Also, at least 5.1 million workers across the affected areas have lost their livelihoods. As members can see, this is a truly serious situation, and this government has stepped up.

Canada has been standing with the Philippine people from day one of this terrible tragedy. In fact, even before it hit, our government realized the severity and dangers the typhoon posed. Our government reacted pre-emptively to ensure that relief operations would be ready to go as soon as possible.

*Government Orders*

We allocated \$30,000 to the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to help them prepare their relief operations. On the day the storm made landfall, November 9, our Canadian government provided \$5 million in support for the provision of emergency shelter, water, food and other essential services. On November 10, our government committed itself further to relief efforts when the hon. Minister of International Development announced the Typhoon Haiyan relief fund.

This fund will match the eligible donations Canadians make to registered Canadian charities over a four-week period, and I would just like to correct the record: it is from November 9 to December 9, 2013.

On November 18, the right hon. Prime Minister announced that Canada would contribute \$15 million to aid efforts. Now today, the hon. Minister of International Development announced further support of needed supplies that will come from DFATD's emergency stockpile.

This means the contribution of the Government of Canada is the fourth largest in the world to the relief effort. Canada's contribution will increase even further when the matching fund closes. It is encouraging that after only a few days the fund is close to \$20 million.

Canadians are generous people. With nearly three weeks to go, imagine how much impact they will end up having toward helping the Filipino people.

It is not only monetary contributions that have made our government's and country's response so effective and successful. On November 13, the right hon. Prime Minister announced that our renowned disaster assistance response team, DART, would deploy to Iloilo. In Iloilo, DART has provided clean water, emergency medical aid and logistical support. The amazing work of the DART cannot be overstated.

I must also commend my colleague, the Minister of National Defence, for the outstanding job he has done in making sure the team responded effectively and continues to do so.

From the very first moment DART set foot in the Philippines, it has been instrumental and successful in providing immediate assistance in this complex humanitarian emergency. I will tell members just a few of the things that DART did yesterday.

Two DART mobile medical teams provided medical services, while another mobile medical team provided similar services in Panay. Also, engineers were clearing the road, one of the many roads they have been clearing so that aid can reach areas that were cut off. In President Roxas in the eastern Capiz province, engineers also set up a water purifier capable of providing 50,000 litres of safe drinking water a day. Since landing in the Philippines, the DART engineering team has also repaired a hospital generator, which has allowed staff to undertake critical surgical operations.

As members can see, the actions of our government and agencies are making a real impact on the ground.

However, please do not take my word alone; hear what others have said about the response and actions of our government.

● (2235)

A vast number of people, organizations and political parties have commended this government. The Filipino secretary of foreign affairs, Albert del Rosario, has thanked Canada for the funds that our government is contributing toward emergency relief activities, the contributions of provincial governments, the deployment of DART and the generous contributions of the Filipino Canadian community.

Yesterday, Ertharin Cousin, the executive director of the World Food Programme, said yesterday, "as of November 18, World Food Programme has scaled-up assistance and reached nearly two million people...in Leyte Province with 1,130 megatons of rice and 11 megatons of high-energy biscuits...Canada's support is essential in meeting immediate needs, so thank you once again".

I would also like to draw attention to the fact that this was made possible because Canada is the second largest donor to the World Food Programme.

As members can see, Canada's commitment to humanitarian assistance is strong and we will continue in this regard.

Another ringing endorsement came from Hossam Elsharkawi, director of emergencies and recovery at the Red Cross. On the *Power & Politics with Evan Solomon* show, Mr. Elsharkawi applauded our government's response and the response and generosity of the Canadian people. He said, "This is absolutely welcome news. Canadians have been generous so far. They continue to be generous with this particular disaster and others".

I am also happy to see that our government's contributions have also been marked by my hon. colleagues across the aisle. On November 14, the member for Davenport said, "[W]e are happy to see that DART has been deployed in the Philippines. We think this is the right move on the part of the government, and also welcome the commitment to expedite visas for those who are in the Philippines who meet the criteria that the government has put. I think that these are the right ways to go".

On November 18, during a post-question period scrum, the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie echoed her caucus colleague by saying:

● (2240)

[*Translation*]

"Listen, we are pleased with the government's response, the rather quick response of the department, and today's additional announcement".

[*English*]

The member for Markham—Unionville also congratulated this government on our response. He said, "I also agree with sending the helicopters there. Don't forget the Philippines is a lot of little islands. It's hard to get around. And I think the short-term response of the government is good".

*Government Orders*

Although the House is usually the scene of highly charged party politics, it is good to see that our parties can have the same view when it comes to dealing with a natural disaster. I want to sincerely thank my colleagues for their comments and their support. It is apparent that all parties realize that we must put the safety and well-being of others before everything else, including party politics. That is what has driven our response to help our fellow human being.

This past Sunday, I attended a fundraising event in Mississauga organized by a grassroots group of Filipino Canadians. I congratulate Julius and his team of volunteers who organized a lively program of music, dance and martial arts demonstrations to keep the audience engaged. The money they raised will be given to World Vision to help the relief efforts. It was wonderful to see so many Canadians come together out of the goodness of their hearts and contribute. It showed that the response to this horrible tragedy has been a full team effort.

This government, our military and, most important, the Canadian people have shown that we all will do what we have to ensure that those affected by this tragedy get the necessary aid.

**Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for her comments, and indeed, for making the point that this is a Canadian response and a pan-partisan response to a tragedy.

The parliamentary secretary made reference to the fact that quite often in the House it is a matter of charged party politics, and one area the two parties might have some differences on is the whole question of the core purpose of the military. I am wondering whether the experience of how well our DART teams have performed might cause us, as parliamentarians in general, to reflect on whether the whole question of emergency response and response to natural disasters is something we should consider deepening and making even more central to the very core of what our armed forces are capable of doing around the world. There would be a good deal of self-interest in that too, because we can help around the world, but we know we are also vulnerable. The more we are ready to respond to what might happen here, the more it makes sense to be developing that capacity, let us call it a specialty, around the globe.

I am wondering if there is anything in what I have said that might appeal to the government benches in terms of the future development of the armed forces.

• (2245)

**Ms. Lois Brown:** Mr. Chair, as the member for Parkdale—High Park said earlier, this is a time right now to focus on the desperate needs of the people in the Philippines. Our hearts, thoughts, and prayers are with those people.

I appreciate the things my colleague has said. Our DART team is second to none in the world. It has the expertise to be on the ground providing medical assistance, water, and sanitation, which is so desperately needed in times of crisis. It has been absolutely exemplary in this case. We saw the work it did in Haiti, and the people of Haiti were incredibly thankful for that contribution. The people in the Philippines are experiencing the same kind of care, concern, and compassion that our DART team takes with it when it goes. It is the ambassador for Canada in situations like this. We are very grateful for the work it does and applaud all its efforts.

We will take that under consideration and have that conversation at a later date, and I hope that my colleague will be part of that conversation.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, again we keep families in the Philippines, families here, emergency workers, and military personnel in our thoughts and prayers.

We should talk about some of the main public health concerns: injuries as a result of the storm or post-flood; the lack of food, water, sanitation and hygiene facilities; food and water-borne illnesses; reproductive health, especially for pregnant women; respiratory infections associated with overcrowding; malnutrition, especially among infants and young children; mental health and psychosocial problems; and vector-borne diseases. Dengue is a real risk.

As of November 18, there is an international action plan for health. It has only been 27% funded, and I am wondering if my colleague could tell us what specifically Canada is doing on health.

I have a second question. Will the government extend the matching funds until the end of the calendar year?

**Ms. Lois Brown:** Mr. Chair, I refer my hon. colleague to some of the things laid out a little earlier in this debate. We talked about \$8 million in humanitarian assistance to provide emergency shelter. One of the organizations receiving funds from us is the International Federation of the Red Cross. These are people who are experts in providing medical services and supplies. We are going to continue to work with these organizations. They are the experts. We are providing the funding they need to go forward to provide the people in the Philippines with that assistance, and we will continue to do so.

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Chair, on behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I would like to say how devastated we are by this tragedy. We want to offer our condolences to the Filipino people during this difficult time.

A number of our Filipino constituents have loved ones and relatives who are affected by this tragedy. We offer them our deepest sympathy. We want them to know that our hearts go out to them. We ask them to stay strong during these painful moments and to have faith that there will be brighter days.

Today our thoughts go out to the women, men and children in the Philippines who are dealing with the impact of this humanitarian tragedy. Times like these are a harsh reminder of how fragile life can be and how much wilder the elements are becoming.

I would also like us to address the fact that the people most affected by these increasingly frequent tragedies are usually the poorest people, whose modest homes are no match for violent winds, tornadoes, hurricanes, floods or earthquakes.



The immediate needs are enormous, and the suffering is unmistakable. In the face of such devastation, we must demonstrate our concern as well as our full solidarity and support. At this time, getting assistance to the people who need it is a huge job, but there will be much more to do in the near future in terms of planning the reconstruction and stabilizing the situation for anyone who has been displaced.

I wish to recognize the many generous acts of all Quebeckers and Canadians who have been deeply touched by this tragedy and who have shown their solidarity with the people of the Philippines by donating as much as they can.

The Canadian government is currently providing considerable assistance, but there are other ways that we could be contributing more. We need to be creative, and most importantly, we must act quickly. Canada should focus on humanitarian assistance, as well as introduce measures to bring more of the disaster victims to Canada and expedite family reunification for those who already have a family member in Canada.

In closing, there are many humanitarian organizations that are making a difference, such as the Canadian Red Cross, which has just set up a facility in the Ormoc region to meet basic medical needs. It is our duty to help and to show solidarity.

• (2250)

[English]

**Ms. Lois Brown:** Mr. Chair, that was not really a question. We have addressed many of those issues already in talking about the contributions to the International Federation of the Red Cross, World Vision, and all of those organizations that have the expertise on the ground.

One of the things I would like to go back to is a comment made before by one of my colleagues on the opposite side about issues related to the climate change. He seemed to think that Canada is not doing anything when it comes to helping some of these developing countries with these issues and preparation.

I would just like to let them know that Canada, through CIDA, the former CIDA, actually, agreed to its contribution to the Copenhagen accord, a contribution of \$1.2 billion for the fast-start climate change financing commitment.

We know that our thematic priorities are food security, children and youth, and sustainable economic growth. Those are our themes for our development dollars. We know that none of those can take place without having countries prepared. The \$1.2 billion Canada has contributed is going to help many of these emerging economies, many of these developing countries, prepare for these kinds of things and ensure that as we go forward, they have a plan.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, before I start, I want to request that I share my time with my colleague from Winnipeg North, a riding that has one of the largest Filipino communities. I know how much my colleague is involved and how much he is helping.

That said, it is important to note that disasters have happened and will happen again, and that we as Canadians will respond in good faith. Sometimes we will respond faster than others and sometimes

### *Government Orders*

we will allocate more resources than other times. There have been times that the current government has responded, but it has gone there screaming and yelling, and there have been times that it has responded right away.

Let us examine those times, because it is very important to do so.

When Haiti happened, the government immediately responded. The Prime Minister went to the Red Cross and made his donation, and the cameras were following him. We were at the time of proroguing. The House of Commons was shut down.

When Haiyan happened in the Philippines, the government responded immediately. This time, we had one of the second-highest hitters, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, writing his cheque when the camera was there. How appropriate. We have seen his good spirit, and the government again is going through a crisis consisting of senators Duffy, Wallin, and Brazeau.

When the earthquake in China happened in 2008, there was no response for a couple of days. We had to force the government time and again before it responded. At that point in time, overwhelmingly the massive support was happening from the Chinese community. It collected millions of dollars, bought tents that were shipped over courtesy of Air Canada, and the Red Cross transferred the money to the Chinese Red Cross. That was all done primarily through community involvement.

A couple of years ago, another typhoon hit the Philippines, and the current government did not act.

However, this time it did act, and what did it put in place? The Conservatives put in place the Liberal protocol for disasters, the protocol that the Liberal government before them had in place for years.

Let us examine that. There were four pillars to it.

One was to expedite family class immigration processing from the areas that were affected, and if anybody was in Canada, to ensure they could stay in Canada until the disaster back home was looked after.

The second was to make the DART available.

The third was to work with communities and match dollar for dollar any funding that they raised for a great length of time.

The fourth was that we would help the communities to help themselves. For any money that they raised, we would respond quickly to ensure we were able to provide a one-time CRA tax donation number so they could issue tax receipts for the money they collected.

This is being done today by the Conservatives, and we from this side agree with them that what they have done is great.

However, we heard tonight that there is no extra allocation of staff at the post in the Philippines. Immigration has absolutely no extra staff to deal with this situation. The immigration officials in the Philippines are overwhelmed. The immigration officials in the Philippines have to deal with thousands of cases. They just got off a strike a number of months ago, so not only do we overburden them, but we also do not provide any extra staff.

*Government Orders*

The other thing we do not hear is the goodwill of Christmas that would allow for the community to respond until Christmas.

I do want to express through my speech my condolences to the families of the people who have been affected. My prayers and thoughts are with them, and I join them in their fight to overcome this. On December 4, on a Wednesday night, IDRF, the International Development and Relief Foundation, will be having an event in Toronto that I will be attending.

I am looking forward to continuing this conversation. I do hope that the Conservatives will stand up and say that more staff is going out to help immigration officials and that the time will be extended until December 31 in order for us to continue to raise more money.

● (2255)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, I thank the member for his kind comments at the beginning of his speech toward me personally and for his speech in its entirety, in terms of how genuine the member is when he stands to speak.

I want to ask him if would provide a comment on one of the issues that we think would be very helpful. Given the amount of fundraising taking place from coast to coast in Canada, there is a need to extend the tax receipt opportunities so that Canadians can continue to contribute all the way up to the end of the year. We think this would be very helpful. I wonder if he would comment on that point.

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Mr. Chair, I know the events and the amount of work that the member is doing in his constituency. I know that his office is probably one of the busiest offices right now, with the immigration cases happening out of the Philippines and that he will be able to share with us that the work that has been done.

We need to be able to extend the time until December 31. I do hope that the Prime Minister comes into this House tomorrow and says, “The 31st it is”, because at the time of Christmas, the time of the spirit of giving and receiving, Canadians will open not only their wallets but their hearts. The little children will tell their parents, “Don't buy me a gift. Let's give a contribution to the typhoon relief efforts in the Philippines”.

For the record, I do want to share with my colleague two things. One is that when the tsunami hit, we, when we were the government, immediately responded, and we had an extra 13 staff in Colombo.

When Muzaffarabad happened a year later, we responded again, and we had an extra five or six staff in Islamabad.

Going back to 2001, when the earthquake happened in Gujarat, in India, immediately the government of the day, the Liberal government, responded by saying, “We are matching dollar for dollar”, and we brought more staff into India, so there is a history here of governments of Canada doing the right thing.

I just hope that the government of the day will respond in the same way that the Liberal government responded by ensuring that we get extra staff and that we extend until December 31 all the matching efforts that the community does in co-operation with registered entities that the government recognizes.

● (2300)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Chair, with respect to visiting visas, student visas, and working visas held by individuals who are here in Canada today, does the member believe that the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration should seriously look at giving the opportunity to have those visas virtually automatically renewed for the areas that have been affected by the typhoon?

**Hon. Jim Karygiannis:** Mr. Chair, I really wish my colleague well with the work that is waiting for him in his riding with all the Filipinos who live in his riding. He has one of the largest Filipino communities in the country in his riding.

I think the Government of Canada should clearly state and signal that it will extend visitor visas for an indefinite amount of time until the situation back in the affected areas in the Philippines has been looked after. Anybody who is here should be given, possibly, a temporary work permit, even if they are visitors, in order for them to be able to provide for themselves and to be able to stay with loved ones here in Canada. As well, the government should make it very easy for loved ones who have been affected to visit from the Philippines and should expedite those visits. Certainly they are suffering right now from traumatic experiences.

We can sit here and talk about it, but it is not the same until we visit the areas. I happened to visit Gujarat, I happened to be in Sri Lanka right after the tsunami, I was in Muzaffarabad, I went to Banda Aceh, and I went to China. I have to tell members I will never forget the experience.

In China, there was one young lady who had been buried for close to four days. When I met her, it brought me to tears. She had exactly the same date of birth and was the same age as my youngest daughter. It was like, through my eyes, seeing my daughter. There is nothing more moving than to see somebody who is the same age as one's child who happened to go through this.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, the Philippines is a beautiful country, a country that I have had the opportunity on a number of occasions to visit. The people of the Philippines are individuals one could describe as kind, loving, hard-working, caring, strong in their faith.

In just over 50 years in the province of Manitoba we have seen the individuals of Filipino heritage go from no existence to over 70,000 and that is just in the province of Manitoba, a province of 1.2 million people. Nationwide over 700,000 people are here today of Filipino heritage.

It is no wonder that when disaster occurs in the Philippines, we have such a wonderful reaction of caring attitudes and the need for us to be able to help. What is so nice to see is that the community that is relatively new over the last 50-plus years has touched lives in every aspect of our society, and as a result, Canadians as a whole are sympathetic to what we are seeing in the Philippines.

Whether it is President Aquino, or the congressmen, or the mayors, the local governors, the congress or the barangay captains, those individuals need to know that across the ocean a country known as Canada truly cares and wants to help. That is what the debate here this evening is about.

*Government Orders*

Last week a member from Etobicoke and I were talking about an emergency debate in the House. When we came back from the break we suggested we should move forward and we were very glad that we were able to come up with the compromise of having a take note debate here this evening.

We need to demonstrate that we are listening to our communities. Our communities want us to tell the people of the Philippines that we care, that we want to be able to help in a very real and tangible way.

On my first day back I was afforded the opportunity to make a statement on behalf of my caucus and this is what I said:

...the Philippines were devastated by Typhoon Haiyan. Each day, the extent of the destruction becomes clearer. Thousands of lives have been lost, many more have been hurt and hundreds of thousands have lost everything.

Over 700,000 people of Filipino heritage call Canada home, and thousands more are here from the Philippines working, studying and visiting in Canada.

The tragedy in the Philippines has touched us all. Canadians care. In a meeting that I hosted with the leader of the Liberal Party and members of the Filipino community, it was made clear that Canada should continue to look at the ways beyond just donating money and providing military support to the Philippines. Speeding up immigration along with assisting the current and expiring working, visiting and student visas is important too.

We must continue to support the community after the international media moves away. I think I can speak for all of us when I say we are thankful for the tireless work of aid and emergency workers who are there around the clock.

On behalf of the Liberal Party, I extend our condolences and prayers to those who have been personally affected by Typhoon Haiyan.

There were others that followed and one statement that was prior to this. Members of all political stripes have stood in their places to acknowledge the tragedy that has occurred.

Earlier today I was at the Philippine Embassy here in Ottawa and I was provided with an update. I applaud the efforts of individuals, whether they are from the embassy or the consulates, whether they are in Toronto, Winnipeg or other areas.

This is right up to date as of 6 p.m., November 20, 2013: 4,011 individuals were reported dead; 18,557 injured; and 1,602 are still missing. A total of 2,150,925 families, or 10,008,955 people were affected in 10,736 barangays, that is communities.

• (2305)

It has been overwhelming. The bottom line is that we want the Philippines to know that Canadians care and we are going to be there for them because we are a country that recognizes the importance of a great nation.

**Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP):** Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for using some adjectives to describe the Filipino people. He described some of them as caring and giving. I have many friends and families who live in my community. I would like to add hard-working and resilient. I know this because when I was in the Philippines in the metro Manila area, in Malate and Bicol, I got to see the people who live and work in the communities first-hand.

I join my colleagues in the House in saying *mabuhay ang Pilipinas*, long live the Philippines. However, I also want to say *salamat* to the Filipinos who are living in Canada, the Canadians of Filipino descent. We thank them. Of course, on behalf of Canadians of Filipino descent in Canada, and the almost 10,000 in my community of Scarborough—Rouge River, I want to say *maraming*

*salamat*, a very big thank you to the members in the community who are coming together to raise money and awareness. We need to continue to do that. We need to continue to act now and give money to the needy communities around the affected areas.

My colleague in his speech had spoken about the need to reunite families. I wonder if he could help us to get the message out to the community members here in Canada. If they have a family member who has been identified in the affected areas how should they be alerting the officials? What should they be doing? Should they be getting in touch with their barangay captains? What should they be doing in their communities to alert Canadian officials so we can actually help them with the family reunification process?

• (2310)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux:** Mr. Chair, whether it is through the Internet, going through the Cebu Canadian consulate office, or going into Manila, there are other alternatives. They should check with their family here in Canada to possibly contact the local member of Parliament. There are numerous ways.

I want to pick up the member's point in regard to resilient people. She is quite right. I have witnessed it first-hand. I have been to places, whether it is Cebu, Dumaguete, Siquijor Island, Pasig, Iligan, Pangasinan, Bulacan, Cavite, and I could go on. These are wonderful communities. There is a common thread. We talk about those traits that we believe are all good about humanity. I witnessed that first-hand in the Philippines, when I had been there after a disaster occurred. I was able to work with local officials to literally put bags of rice into the hands of children. It is a wonderful thing to see a community come together to help out. I have seen it in the past and we are witnessing it once again here.

My hat goes off to the people of the Philippines, but also to all Canadians who are doing what they can to make a difference. I suspect at the end of the day even with all this tragedy, there will be some good that will come out of it, even though it is so sad to see so much destruction take place because of this super typhoon.

**Mr. Mark Adler (York Centre, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Don Valley West.

It is with a heavy heart that I rise here this evening to talk about the great humanitarian tragedy that has occurred in the Philippines.

It has been well articulated so far, how many people have been killed and how many are now homeless. It has also been well enunciated, both by members on this side and on the opposite side, about the great human tragedy we have been witnessing in the Philippines. From the jaws of that great tragedy, we have seen the best of Canada. A lot of people have spoken about the great things many Canadians have been doing.

The riding of York Centre, the riding I am so fortunate to represent, is a very ethnocultural riding. We boast one of the largest Filipino communities of any riding in the country. Over the past couple of weeks, we have been working closely with the Filipino community to help alleviate much of the humanitarian crisis that has been occurring in the Philippines.

*Government Orders*

It has not stopped there. What we attempted to do last week in York Centre really is a model that should be duplicated across the country. It is a model because it exhibits what the great Canadian family stands for. We know that when one member of a family is down, it is incumbent upon and the responsibility of other members of that family to reach down and pull that other family member up. That is what we have seen in the riding of York Centre.

Let me be more specific. Last week I got on the phone and called up a number of different faith leaders in the riding of York Centre. I called different churches and synagogues. I asked the religious leaders what they were doing the following day at one o'clock. All of them had plans, but I told them what I wanted to do, which was to organize an event whereby different faith leaders would stand, side by side, shoulder to shoulder, in support of the Filipino people.

Every one of them said "I am busy, but because of what you want to do, Mark, we will be there at one o'clock. We will drop all of our plans and be there".

What we did was organize an event. It started off as a prayer session. We had six different pastors from six different ethnic churches and a rabbi. We gathered outside of Yummy Market, which is in the heart of York Centre. Yummy Market is the central place for the Russian-speaking community. That is where they do all of their shopping. We have the largest Russian-speaking community of any riding in the country.

We had all these different faith leaders come to Yummy Market. We called up Plan Canada, one of the designated charities, where dollars will be matched dollar for dollar. We got Plan Canada involved and we got cans from it to place at the checkout counters in Yummy Market. We have been encouraging other retailers throughout the riding of York Centre to accept these cans.

What we are doing is when consumers make their purchases and they are checking out of the different retail store counters, we are asking them to deposit change into these cans. These cans will be given to Plan Canada and in turn sent over to the Philippines for humanitarian relief.

Yummy Market was the first to accept these cans. We had all these different faith leaders. We had a lot of ethnic media turn out for the event. It is so important. What that demonstrates is the best of Canada. When one member of our community is down, all members of our community come to the rescue and come to stand side by side, shoulder to shoulder, with all of its other members.

That is so heartwarming to see. Now we have those cans for collecting coins in dozens of retail outlets across the riding of York Centre.

● (2315)

As we were wrapping up the event, a woman came over to me and said, "I have a problem with your cans, Mark. I have dollar bills I want to put in, and I can only put change in".

People want to help. People want to give. This humanitarian crisis has really demonstrated the best Canada has to offer. It demonstrates that our country is a great champion of human dignity.

**Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.):** Mr. Chair, it is inspiring to hear about the work people are doing. One of the first

things I knew about my colleague from Winnipeg North was his admiration and respect for the Canadian Filipino community and how many times he had gone to the Philippines. We are hearing this around the House tonight.

I have two questions. First, will the government extend the matching funds until the end of the calendar year? Second, will the government grant visa extensions for students, temporary workers, and other workers from the typhoon area?

We are all showing our caring, and this is another way we can show our caring tonight.

**Mr. Mark Adler:** Mr. Chair, we have been showing our caring considerably.

The matching funds will be accepted up to December 9. Decisions will be made later on as to how we will carry on from that point, but at the moment, I would encourage all Canadians, including the hon. member, to encourage people within her own riding, as many of us have already done, both on this side and on the other side of the House, to give as much as possible.

I understand that clothes and other goods are not needed as much as cash. I hear that it costs about \$65 to send a box across to the Philippines. What the Filipino people need right now is cash. They need money to rebuild and resettle those people who now have no homes, no food, and no pure water.

Decisions will be made later on as to what will be forthcoming in the fullness of time. Let me just say that at this point what we must focus on is the health, welfare, and sheer humanity of helping the people of the Philippines. That should be the major focus of our efforts right now.

● (2320)

**Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for his great work and his great words tonight. The work he has done in reaching out to communities and charitable organizations in Toronto and across this country is really critical to the overall relief we need to bring to the people of the Philippines. It is a real tragedy going on over there. Again, I just want to thank the hon. member for the work he is doing.

Would my colleague reiterate to Canadians how important giving is? Let us take this time of year, a time of giving and a time of celebrating, to remember those who need it most, and that is the people of the Philippines.

**Mr. Mark Adler:** Mr. Chair, that is an excellent question from the parliamentary secretary.

I am very heartened by a lot of the actions I am seeing within the riding of York Centre. I will give the House one more example. A couple of young kids I know are having their bar mitzvahs in a couple of weeks. Rather than accepting gifts or money for their bar mitzvahs, they are encouraging people to make a money donation to Philippines relief.

That demonstrates the best of Canada. That is what Canada is all about. That is what family does. I am so proud to call Canada my home and to say that the Filipino people and all others are such wonderful Canadians. I am so proud to be a Canadian.

*Government Orders*

**The Deputy Chair:** Resuming debate. The last five minutes of the debate this evening go to the hon. member for Don Valley West.

**Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC):** Mr. Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to join in this debate tonight. I want to begin by offering my heartfelt sympathy and support to all those within the Filipino community who have been impacted by the terrible tragedy of Typhoon Haiyan. My thoughts and prayers are with the entire Filipino Canadian community at a time that is desperate for so many.

Canada is working hard to ease the suffering of the people affected by the typhoon that swept through the Philippines nearly two weeks ago. As a clearer picture of the full impact of the storm emerges, we know that as many as 13 million people have been affected and that more than 4 million people have been displaced. More than 1 million houses have been either damaged or outright destroyed.

Contributions in response to the typhoon are pouring in from all over the world. We are already starting to see the positive impact that international assistance is making in the lives of those affected by this terrible tragedy.

Canada continues to be deeply concerned for the people of the Philippines, and we have been a leading player in the international response. We continue to work through both Canadian and international partners to alleviate suffering and save lives, in response to the crisis.

Canada has been engaged from the beginning, making humanitarian assistance a priority and helping those people affected by the typhoon. Even before Typhoon Haiyan hit, Canada allocated \$30,000 to the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies to help them to prepare for the coming onslaught. Within 24 hours of the storm sweeping across the Philippines, Canada pledged an additional \$5 million to support the work of humanitarian partners on the ground, allowing them to begin providing assistance immediately.

One day after that, in response to the unprecedented level of damage and knowing the desire of Canadians to help those in need, the Government of Canada announced the Typhoon Haiyan relief fund. Let me just say that Canadians' generosity has been impressive and immediate. Already, more than \$19 million in donations from Canadians has been received by registered Canadian charities.

On November 11, Canada deployed its disaster assistance response team, or DART, which will provide relief such as water

and sanitation, as well as emergency health care. This was soon followed by the deployment of the Canadian Red Cross field hospital and a medical team, which is part of Canada's strategic partnership with the organization.

In addition, Canada's support for key United Nations agencies contributed to the early response to the crisis. For example, Canada is the fifth largest donor to the central emergency response fund, which quickly released \$25 million to respond to the devastation. To address ongoing needs, Canada committed \$15 million in humanitarian assistance on November 18. This means that Canada is the fourth largest donor to this relief effort. This demonstration is well noted among the Filipino community.

I had the opportunity just last Friday to attend a mass at Our Lady of the Assumption Catholic Parish in Toronto, a church that welcomed some 400 or 500 Filipinos and their families to attend mass under the leadership of Archbishop Thomas Cardinal Collins. I can tell the House that it was a most moving and memorable service.

Our government continues to stand with the Filipino Canadians who are desperately waiting for news of their loved ones and especially with those who have had their worst fears confirmed. Our government also announced last week that, effective immediately, we will be prioritizing outstanding visa applications from Filipinos who are significantly and personally affected by the typhoon. I am sure I speak on behalf of all Canadians when I say we stand beside them now in the wake of this devastating typhoon.

Canadians are among the most compassionate and generous people in the world, and they are proving it through their overwhelming donations to the Canadian charities that are responding to the impact of Typhoon Haiyan.

I am thankful for the opportunity to bring the hon. members up to date on how Canada is responding to the needs of people affected by Typhoon Haiyan.

● (2325)

**The Deputy Chair:** It being 11:27 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 53(1), the committee will rise and I will leave the Chair.

(Government Business No. 4 reported)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m. pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 11:27 p.m.)



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