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Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, June 16, 2014

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

•(1105)

[*English*]

GEORGIAN BAY CHANNEL TO LOCK 45 – PORT SEVERN

Mr. Bruce Stanton (Simcoe North, CPC) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, the government should consider the advisability of measures to deepen and straighten the vessel navigation channel which provides access between Georgian Bay and the westerly limit of the Trent-Severn Waterway, at Port Severn.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is a great privilege to address the House this morning, on the kind of rare occasion for a chair occupant to have the opportunity to address the House. As many members may know, I have the privilege of having chair occupancy, along with the great team that does work in this area, the hon. member for Regina—Qu'Appelle, the hon. member for Windsor—Tecumseh, and the hon. member for Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock. It is a great team to be part of, but it does not accord us with the time to address the House, except on rare occasions such as this.

As the motion was read, members can tell that this is about improving a very specific part of the navigable waterway, just below Lock 45 at the village of Port Severn. That may not be all that familiar to a lot of members, so I will describe exactly where that is.

Before I go on, I want to mention that my seconder today, the hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London, is greatly familiar with this area that we speak of. Of course, he is very close to a part of the Great Lakes himself, representing his riding in southwestern Ontario. He is intimately familiar with the kinds of benefits that are derived from the recreational boating economy that is a central part of job creation and wealth creation in our part of Ontario.

Georgian Bay is a part of my riding. As members might know, it is almost as large as Lake Ontario itself. It sits on the northeastern corner of Lake Huron. Lake Huron and Lake Michigan are the two lakes that actually compose slightly over 50% of the total area of the Great Lakes in their entirety.

In my part of the riding, there are several communities along the south shore of Georgian Bay. This is the southernmost portion of the

bay where, for many recreational boating activists and participants from the GTA and southern Ontario, it is the closest point at which they can meet with Georgian Bay.

In my riding alone, there are no less than 4,000 recreational boat slips. There is also all of the economy that ensues from that, whether from repair shops to marine services to sales to retail, all of the things that derive from that basic economic activity.

Georgian Bay connects many towns and villages, of which members may be well aware, and we all have a great stake in that recreational boating economy. These are places like Owen Sound and Parry Sound. In my riding, there are Midland and Penetanguishene; places like Collingwood, Tobermory, Manitoulin Island, the North Channel. However, this being a binational waterway, it also connects with the recreational boating traffic from the United States, especially in our corner, from the State of Michigan.

All of the boaters who frequent Canada during the fair weather months make their routes from the northeastern parts of the United States up to the Great Lakes, and then find their way through the Trent-Severn Waterway from Georgian Bay back down to Lake Ontario. They can then reconnect with the Erie Canal, and right back down south along the eastern seaboard, all the way to Florida.

I mentioned the Trent-Severn Waterway. Many members are familiar with this wonderful waterway. There are members in the House who have familiarity with it because they have cottages or real estate on it. It is part of southern Ontario's cottage country community, which has no less than \$23.6 billion worth of residential property. This is a waterway that was built by the Government of Canada in the late 19th century and early into the 20th century, comprising, as I said, \$23.6 billion in residential property, with an annual economic influx to our region of about \$1 billion annually and all of the different economic activities that ensue from it.

It is a waterway that is 386 kilometres long, connecting Georgian Bay at the village of Port Severn, all the way down through central Ontario, Lake Simcoe, through the Kawartha Lakes, and out to Lake Ontario on the north shore, around the town of Trenton.

There is a total of 160 dams, 44 locks, one marine railway, and some 50,000 residences on the waterway itself. There are another 16,500 residences on what are called the reservoir lakes. They are the lakes that were created to provide water to the Trent-Severn Waterway over the course of the summer, so that the navigation operation could continue.

Private Members' Business

That brings us to the little village of Port Severn itself. Port Severn is at the mouth of the Severn River. Where the Severn River flows, the river itself drains an area of approximately 5,500 square kilometres of our part of the area just east of the shoreline of Georgian Bay. It flows down through there, including the Lake Simcoe watershed, which goes as far south as the Oak Ridges Moraine, as those in the Toronto and southern Ontario will know. It is the high ground just above the city of Toronto. Everything north of that moraine drains northward initially, through Lake Simcoe, and eventually into the Severn River. It flows out to Georgian Bay through the Severn River.

During the time of early settlement in Ontario, that river was critical to the local economy involving the lumber industry. It was the main route to get fallen logs from their part of the watershed to the mills. Port Severn was established for the lumber industry, and it took its path from those early routes. For the case of today's discussion, it is also the point at which all of the navigable waterways and recreational boating activity that occurs both on Georgian Bay and the inland waterway up the Trent-Severn connect. There could be anywhere up to 40,000 vessels across the waterway itself. The ability to connect between the two waterways is through a very narrow channel, which is right below Lock 45 on its way to Georgian Bay.

We do not have the ability to show members any graphs, pictures, posters, or anything of that sort, so I will do my best. I would ask members to imagine the eastern shore of Georgian Bay as being fairly shallow. Along the approaches to the shoreline, there are very few areas where there is enough water depth to allow larger vessels to get close to shore. Therefore, when the canal was built in the late 19th century to early 20th century, and the navigation channel was essentially excavated out of the rock to allow more vessels to come through, it was done in a way that would allow them passage between the two waterways. As I said, most parts of the Trent-Severn were built around 1880, and finished in 1920, with the final link between Lake Couchiching and Sparrow Lake. It has largely been the same from the early days when the canal was created.

I know that many members have travelled the incredible expressway that we have to cottage country in Ontario, called Highway 400. It starts right in Toronto, and there are four lanes all the way to Sudbury. There are only a few narrow spots, along the French River area and south of it, that are still two lanes, but the Province of Ontario continues to build it. That highway crosses the canal right at Port Severn. Of course, the canal in question here existed well before that highway was created.

When the canal was built, they built it for the vessels of the day. They also built it for the amount of traffic that existed at that time. As one can imagine, both have grown over the decades. Vessels have become larger and there is more traffic. In fact, we see upward of 6,200 passages through Lock 45 in a given season. In the summer, up to 82 vessels per day pass through the canal, one way or the other.

What has created a problem for the canal since the year 2000 is that we have had a persistent low water condition in the upper Great Lakes, on Lake Huron, Lake Michigan, and on Georgian Bay. As that has persisted, the difficulty in navigating the canal has become worse.

●(1110)

Members may know that the water levels on Georgian Bay fluctuate about a metre and a half from top to bottom, and that happens on about a 15 to 20-year cycle. However, recently, particularly because of climatic conditions, we have had a persistent low period of water levels. We have seen that come back and recover a little this past year, but the low water conditions have made the channel that much more treacherous for larger boats to navigate.

What exactly is wrong with it?

Those of you who have piloted vessels like this would know that when there are onshore winds or currents that are sometimes unexpected and one is navigating a 32 or 34-foot vessel through a channel like that, the sudden change in conditions can move one into a spot that is not so easy to deal with. The risk of collision, either with shoals or other vessels, becomes very real. This is exactly what has happened in this little canal below Lock 45. In fact, pilots of various vessels have spread the word that this is a very treacherous canal.

The community of pilots of these vessels is very close knit. These people all talk with each other, and they have simply stayed away. We have also heard from operators of marinas all across my region, and they are the ones who originally brought this issue to my attention. They want to know what can be done to make the canal more safe.

Therefore, over the last year, I undertook to see exactly what could be done. We talked to local contractors to find out what it would take to make the canal safe. They are in the business of doing this kind of work, and they know what they are doing.

We had one project estimate to remove approximately 1,200 cubic metres of rock from this particular channel, to widen, deepen, and straighten it, to make sure that vessels could get through even if a low water condition existed. The cost of this project is in the range of \$650,000, which is not a huge amount of money. It is removing rock, but once it is done, it would stay done, just as the existing channel has from its early days. This is not an area that will continue to be silted in, and so on.

This is a project that needs to be done. It is a very specific channel, and it would make a mountain of difference for our operators of retail navigation, marine navigation, and all of the various businesses and employees who rely on this kind of employment. It would allow much more traffic between the Trent-Severn Waterway and the Georgian Bay destination.

I should say, by the way, that Georgian Bay is the very best inland waterway that Ontario has to offer. The member for Elgin—Middlesex—London may disagree because he is on beautiful Lake Erie, and of course all the members who are situated around the Great Lakes would know what great boating our Great Lakes offer. However, for those who have had the chance to visit the Georgian Bay coastline, it is stunning. There are fantastic services and communities along it, which provide great services for boaters.

Private Members' Business

I am presenting a proposition to the House for consideration. I have asked in the motion for the government to consider the advisability of the measures it would take to make this channel more safe and take away the deterrents to boating in this region of the country. I realize that we do not know what may follow in terms of the water level conditions that may persist. However, if it is anything like the last 13 years or so, if not addressed, it would conceivably still represent problems.

I seek the support of the House to pass this motion and take one next step toward getting those measures complete.

• (1115)

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Simcoe North for his speech and for bringing this motion forward to the House.

Having visited that area, I concur that the northern part of the Trent-Severn Waterway, up around Port Severn, is indeed stunning. I think that all MPs who represent people along the 380 kilometres of the Trent-Severn Waterway would agree that it is quite stunning, with each part of the waterway offering its own particular landscape and engineering marvels.

In light of the member's description of the waterway as a whole and the complexity of the watershed and interests that are involved along the Trent-Severn Waterway, from the different types of recreational use to the natural environment, can he tell the House what kind of assessments and consultations have been done to support the motion? For example, have economic and environmental assessments been done? Have first nations been consulted?

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Mr. Speaker, the member for Beaches—East York asked a pertinent question.

There is no doubt that the nature of in-water works in our part of the world requires a rigorous examination in terms of the environmental impact. Several regulatory authorities would become involved in that process, and regardless of whether a private or public enterprise undertook the work, all of those permits would have to be satisfied. The lead agency in this case would be the provincial ministry of the environment and natural resources, which would provide the necessary permitting. That is a public process that one would have to go through.

In terms of other consultations because of the nature and scope of the work, this is a very specific rock excavation that would not be a lot different from any other remedial types of excavations in the area. Not having a broad application in the local community, consultations have been really restricted to the local economic interests in our area.

• (1120)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was paying close attention to the hon. member's speech, because he and I share a reservoir lake, so we are both keen about what happens on the Trent-Severn Waterway.

There is no question that we are broadly supportive of the motion and agree completely with the whole argument of the economic multiplier that is the Trent-Severn Waterway writ large, not only from Georgian Bay but right through to Kingston and on to Ottawa, for that matter.

I am sure the member would agree with me that there have been a number of years of low water, as he mentioned in his speech. This is just the natural effect of climate change. We are into a situation where climate is disrupting normal patterns, whether it is rain or whatever.

I am given to understand that not only to adapt to climate change but also for other impacts on the waterway, there is somewhere in the order of \$350 million worth of deferred maintenance for the entire system. I am wondering whether this is part of this, whether this is a special one-off, or whether the whole system needs a complete rebuild.

Mr. Bruce Stanton: Mr. Speaker, the member for Scarborough—Guildwood would know well that the ageing infrastructure of the Trent-Severn does need regular attention. That was one of the reasons I was glad to see in budget 2014 a commitment of \$391.5 million for Parks Canada to complete many projects involving dams, bridges, and roads on properties that are under Parks Canada. To answer my colleague's specific question, though, this would be a one-off, as he described, and would not be contemplated within the existing Parks Canada budget.

It is actually just outside the Trent-Severn Waterway jurisdiction. It goes as far as the dock on the low side of Lock 45, so the government would have to authorize additional funds. The government would have to consider how that might be accommodated, but it would not exist on the current list of deferred maintenance affecting the Trent-Severn Waterway.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise in the House today and speak to Motion No. 502, which calls on the government to consider the advisability of measures to strengthen and deepen the vessel navigation channel that provides access from Georgian Bay to the westerly limit of the Trent-Severn Waterway at Port Severn. What the motion is attempting to address is a bit of a hazardous part of the trip through the 386 kilometre waterway. The channel these folks are having to go through is rock-faced, quite narrow, and subject to swift currents from the operation of the locks and also from winds. The boats that travel through that narrow channel often get shifted around by both the currents and winds into rock faces and experience problems.

I am very pleased to speak to the motion for a couple of reasons. First, I spent three happy summers on the Trent-Severn Waterway as a summer student and another year on the Rideau Canal, again as a summer student. These were great jobs. Students, frankly, could not ask for better work. It was outside. It was well paid. That work went a long way in helping me through those years of university.

I have to acknowledge that I was not lock staff. I was an interpretive guide. On the Trent-Severn, I spent most of my time in Peterborough at the lift lock, the highest lift lock in the world, as I am sure all of us in the House know. However, I did get the opportunity to see the full length of the waterway, sometimes dressed as Boomer the beaver, sometimes just in my Parks Canada uniform. It was amazing.

Private Members' Business

I got to see the Kirkfield lift lock too, which is the second highest lift lock in the world. Who knew? I also got to see the marine railway up at Big Chute. These are engineering marvels, top to bottom, on the Trent-Severn.

My time on the Rideau was similarly spent as an interpretive guide and split between the blockhouse at Kingston Mills and the blacksmith shop up at Jones Falls, where, by the end of the summer, I became pretty handy at bashing out a few standard household items over the forge.

Neither of these jobs had the cool factor of lock staff, it goes without saying, since I had to dress as Boomer the beaver from time to time and run around in militia uniform firing off muskets in the dark. However, they did afford me the opportunity as a young person to get some insight into the history of our country, and indeed, into the history of the first nations and how they lived on these lands and used the natural waterways before the canals actually linked them. There are a couple of lessons in all of this that stand out for me.

We have before us a relatively modest motion. I think the member has priced it at \$600,000 and change. Of course, given the numbers we deal with in the House, that strikes us as relatively small.

What I want to talk about is the issue of ambition, and this is why I support even this smaller proposal in the motion. It is the ambition required of nation builders and the ambition Canada once had to build the infrastructure that makes a nation. These waterways were carved out of some very difficult and unforgiving land, and they remain marvels, national historic sites, both the Rideau and the Trent-Severn. Of course, the Rideau has the UNESCO World Heritage Site designation as well. They remain, among other things, marvels of engineering. The lift locks along the Trent-Severn still captivate and perplex people. It is so simple, yet people stand at the bottom wondering how these things work and how they were built.

The waterways are but two examples, albeit outstanding ones, of an infrastructure that built our country. Laying railroad track across the country, across beautiful but hostile territory, through equally difficult and often deadly summers and winters, was no less a feat of course.

• (1125)

It is not just about the rural and remote infrastructure that built this country; it is also about urban infrastructure in Toronto. One need only look at the Bloor Street viaduct built almost 100 years ago. It was designed to facilitate mass transit at the beginning of the 20th century, long before we needed mass transit. Its upper deck was built to accommodate streetcars while the lower deck was built for rail transportation. It was controversial at the time because of the high additional costs. However, the bridge's designer and the commissioner of public works for Toronto at the time, R.C. Harris, were able to have their way, and the lower deck on that Bloor Street viaduct proved to save millions upon millions of dollars when the TTC, the Toronto Transit Commission, ultimately opened the Bloor-Danforth subway almost half a century later and they were able to use that bridge with no major structural changes.

Just down the road from my home in Toronto, and ever so slightly outside my riding, unfortunately, because I would like to call it my own, is the R.C. Harris water filtration plant. It tells a similar story.

Early in the 20th century, Toronto was plagued with water shortages and unclear drinking water, so a plant was built in the 1930s to purify water. That is the R.C. Harris water filtration plant. It still functions today, providing almost half the water to Toronto and York Region all these years later.

It is interesting that Michael Ondaatje's novel *In the Skin of a Lion* tells the story of how in the 1930s water intakes were built more than 2.5 kilometres out under the lake, offshore, in 15 metres of water, and connected to the plant through pipes running under the bed of the lake. These were the kinds of ambitions we had at one time to build the infrastructure upon which we built great cities and a great country. It is forward looking, it is courageous, and it understands that infrastructure needs to be built now to serve as the foundation for a prosperous future. We are falling short on this. I talk all the time in this House about the impact of the lack of ambition of successive federal governments on our cities, but here let me restrict my comments to our waterways.

Recent estimates suggest that Parks Canada is letting our cultural, economic, and environmental assets go. Recent reports on Parks Canada and its assets suggests that there has been poor stewardship of its vast holdings, estimated in 2012 to require some \$2.9 billion in deferred repairs. Deferred work on the Trent-Severn Waterway alone is estimated to be worth almost \$700 million.

In a recent letter made public by retired managers of both the Trent-Severn and the Rideau Canal, they point to many problems emerging from the cuts made in the 2012 budget. Some of those cuts have been restored, but they have left a devastating impact on these two canals. The managers speak to the natural and cultural resources of the two waterways. They speak to all the complexity of uses of these waterways and the complexity of the watershed the waterways run through, and all the recreational uses. They challenge the government to ask itself whether it is really paying attention and respecting the heritage we have here.

The second point, just to conclude, is a more modern one. This letter points to this issue that these waterways are not remote anymore. They serve many functions and many people and fall under the jurisdiction of more than one government. That is to say that management is always a complex issue, and many important interests need to be served. The cuts to the hours of operation of these canals that flowed from the 2012 budget have had a devastating impact. As someone who worked on the waterway at one point in time, I know that the rolling crews through these locks is devastating to the economies along the waterway.

Private Members' Business

To support the motion, one thing I would like to see come out of it is greater consultation with all the competing and many complementary interests that exist along the waterway.

● (1130)

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Simcoe North for bringing forward this important motion. It is one that we will be supporting.

It is a local issue about which his community clearly cares. The member for Simcoe North has kindly shared with me support letters from arenas and other businesses, as well as property owners in his riding. As he rightly points out, this about is \$24 billion worth of property, 160 dams, 50,000 residences and property owners, and more.

By way of background for those who are not as familiar with Ontario as I and the member, we are talking about the channel that links the Trent-Severn Waterway to Georgian Bay. It is a winding, narrow passage chiselled from the rock floor of Georgian Bay, immediately south of Lock 45 in Port Severn, Ontario. It is a hazard for recreational vessels because it is, first, rock-faced. Second, it requires fairly sharp turns. Third, it is not wide enough for larger vessels to pass each other. Finally, it suffers from unexpected swift currents from the release of water from the locks.

The channel becomes even more difficult to navigate safely during low water level conditions on Georgian Bay, a condition that has now prevailed since 1999. The bay is currently 35 centimetres below its long-term average for this time of year. The hazardous nature of the channel has deterred boaters from using it, resulting in lost business for services, arenas, retail sector, food services and more on Georgian Bay.

As an environmental lawyer, I fully understand that water resources support Canada's social fabric, underpin our biodiversity and are central to our economic prosperity.

Now, while I support the motion, I also think the government has a responsibility to take action when environmental challenges pose threats to our environment and our economy. This is a perfect demonstration project or case of how we should hand the realities we will face over the next 50 to 100 years.

For the past 20 years, I have been calling for a detailed national climate change strategy for Canada, a strategy to both mitigate and help adapt to climate change.

Just last weekend, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change released some numbers showing that the concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere was now well over 400 parts per million and holding. Why is that important? It is important because we are trying to maintain the projected temperature increases to 2°C going forward. If we continue to climb in the concentration of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, it will be very difficult to contemplate holding that temperature increase to 2°C.

Why is this so important? It is important because we now know that the Great Lakes are in long-term decline because we have seen an ever-increasing temperature increase in them for a few reasons, mostly evaporation because of temperature increases.

We have also the effects of the dredging of the St. Clair River, and we have seen other effects of climate change right across Canadian society: storms, flooding, and the frequency and severity of these are going to continue.

If we had a national climate change strategy for Canada, it would help address the low water levels. It would help many waterways in Canada become safer and easier to navigate, without having to pay hundreds of thousands of dollars apiece for dredging.

That makes it all the more difficult to understand why the Prime Minister, last week, with the Prime Minister of Australia, once again, positioned the economy and the environment in isolation from each other, saying that we could not afford to address the climate change challenge. He could not be more wrong.

Last year, Lake Huron and Lake Michigan hit their lowest January water levels since record-keeping began in 1918, following more than a decade of below normal rain and snowfall, and higher temperatures that increased evaporation.

Furthermore, at a time when we need more and better science, one would think we would want to know, for the 50,000 property owners along this waterway, what might be coming.

● (1135)

At that very time, we found out that the Conservative government was cutting funding for environmental science. It has cut funding to the International Joint Commission, leading to Lana Pollack, the U. S. co-chair of the IJC, commenting, "We have always depended on good collaboration with agencies in both the governments. When those agencies get cut, we feel it, the lakes feel it."

For the Conservative members who might want to listen, in the report on plans and priorities over the next two years, the government plans to decrease Environment Canada's budget by one-third, 30%. That is \$300 million cut from a \$1 billion budget.

In 2014-15, again in the report on plans and priorities, climate change and clean air programs are being cut 70% between now and 2017. I would think the member, in this important motion, would want to work internally in his own caucus to remind the Prime Minister that we need to help these property owners. We need to help companies in the private sector to adjust to these new realities.

Instead of embracing the economic opportunities that are inherent in the adaptation mitigation that is to come, the government continues to divide the two. International climate change and clean air funding will be cut 45% and staffing level will be cut by over 80% by 2017. That hardly sounds like a country getting ready to adjust to the realities of climate change and all of the economic opportunities that are inherent in addressing climate change going forward.

Private Members' Business

We will continue to put pressure on the government to also drive forward on a national water resources strategy, a comprehensive water strategy, working with the provinces, municipalities, territories and beyond, and, when necessary, with the government of the United States. Our waterways are interconnected, our land masses are connected, our oceans are contiguous. We are going to have to work together.

Finally, this is a wonderful opportunity, a wonderful case, where if the government had not eliminated the national round table on the environment and the economy, the national round table could have worked with the member, with private businesses, with aboriginal groups, with environmental NGOs and with orders of government to come together with a better, more comprehensive approach to deal with the watershed management challenge.

It is unfortunate, but it is an important moment for the government to stop, drop the rhetoric, drop the partisanship, drop the ideology on climate change, and understand that we can, as one person once said, do a lot of damage to the planet by running down its capital. Imagine how much more money we could make by actually replenishing it.

● (1140)

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise today to speak to the motion at hand, sponsored by the member for Simcoe North. I want to thank him for bringing it forward, as well as the interventions already by the member for Beaches—East York and Ottawa South in the debate today. I hope to explain a bit about Transport Canada's role under the motion in front of us today.

I am pleased to speak about Transport Canada's mandate under the Navigation Protection Act in relation to proposed dredging projects, such as deepening and straightening the navigation channel between Georgian Bay and the westerly limit of the Trent-Severn Waterway at Port Severn.

The high current in the channel makes it a difficult and challenging channel to navigate. The government recognizes the benefits of improving access within this waterway and supports, in principle, the initiative to widen and straighten the navigation channel to improve navigation through this busy recreational waterway.

However, it is important to note that Transport Canada does not dredge for the purposes of enhancing recreational boating. Rather, when a proponent brings forward a submission for a proposed dredging project, Transport Canada undertakes a regulatory review of the navigation safety of the project under the Navigation Protection Act, formally known as the Navigable Waters Protection Act.

As members are aware, the Navigable Waters Protection Act was amended in December 2012 as part of budget Bill C-45 in order to modernize the regulatory process that oversees our navigable waters.

The NWPA was one of Canada's oldest pieces of legislation, dating from a time when our waterways were Canada's primary transportation routes. A key purpose of the act was the protection of navigation in the context of allowing the construction and placement

of works in, on, over, under, through, or across navigable waters in Canada.

A significant change to the act was the change in name to the Navigation Protection Act, correctly aligning the name of the act with its navigation safety mandate. Another key change was the addition of a schedule of specific navigable waters, focusing efforts on the regulation of those works that had the biggest impact on navigation in Canada. The schedule is focused on those waters that support busy commercial or recreation-related navigation, that are accessible by ports and marinas, and that are often in close proximity to heavily populated areas.

Nautical charts compiled by the Canadian Hydrographic Service, reliance on departmental historic data, and information acquired through Statistics Canada related to freight movement on Canadian waterways were used to compile the list.

Canadians have a public right of navigation; that is, the right to free and unobstructed passage over navigable waters. The new Navigation Protection Act operates as a statutory exception to the common law, allowing interferences with the public right of navigation.

In this day and age, where economic stimulus remains a top priority for Canada, I believe the amendments to the act have seized the opportunity to create a modern, robust, and flexible legislative regime that can effectively respond to current and future needs of Canadians. Ultimately, these amendments will facilitate better economic growth.

For years provincial, territorial, and municipal governments expressed a desire for the Government of Canada to overhaul the legislation and reduce the red tape. The amendments to the act respond to this demand, making it easier for communities to build important infrastructure like roads, bridges, and wharves, which create jobs and economic development.

For the purposes of our discussion today, the navigation channel that provides access between Georgian Bay and the westerly limit of the Trent-Severn Waterway at Port Severn is included in the schedule of waters.

The Trent-Severn Waterway is an important Canadian navigation and environmental resource, dating back to the 19th century transportation systems in Ontario, and continues to contribute to Canadian society today as part of our proud heritage. Thousands of boaters use the Trent-Severn each year, millions visit and enjoy the lock stations and other public sites along the canals, many local community businesses provide services to both residents and tourists, and, in addition, communities have been built around the lifestyles associated with this waterway.

In summary, this waterway continues to be a substantial boost to the economy of the region.

● (1145)

As I mentioned earlier, the navigation channel that provides access between Georgian Bay and the westerly limit of the Trent-Severn Waterway is on the schedule. This means that any proposed work on this navigable water may require a review and authorization by Transport Canada's officials under the Navigation Protection Act.

Transport Canada's role in any proposed dredging project on any navigable waterway listed on the schedule is to continue to support a safe and efficient transportation system through the regulatory review process, thereby minimizing risks to navigation.

It should be noted that some works, including dredging, may fall under the category of designated or minor works. Works in this category do not require review and authorization by Transport Canada's officials if the works meet the criteria set out in the minor works order.

Should a dredging project not meet the minor works criteria, Transport Canada's officials would work closely with their clients, usually the owners of the works, and with federal and provincial partners throughout the process of assessing the potential impacts of proposed works. They are directly involved in activities and operations that can impact navigation, and they serve clients in Canada's industrial sectors, all levels of government, stakeholders in the tourism and recreation sector, private property owners, and the general public.

To reiterate, a primary purpose of the Navigation Protection Act is to regulate works that risk interfering with navigation in waters listed in the schedule to the act. A proponent's submission requirements are determined by Transport Canada's officials and include important and relevant project information, such as final design and construction details. This detailed information is required for Transport Canada's officials to identify likely interferences with shipping and boating activities.

In the case of a proposed project for dredging within the Trent-Severn Waterway, the proponent would have to comply with the process for a regulatory submission. It is the owner's responsibility to submit a notice and receive confirmation from Transport Canada's officials prior to any construction. Specifically for this case, the proponent would be responsible for contacting the Transport Canada navigation protection program for the Ontario region. Transport Canada regional officials will provide the proponent with the relevant submission requirements.

In closing, Transport Canada's responsibility regarding this initiative is to review any proposed works in scheduled navigable waters to ensure they are constructed in a manner that considers the impacts to navigation and supports a safe and efficient transportation system. Transport Canada works closely with clients to assist them with a smooth and transparent regulatory review and authorization process.

● (1150)

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as always it is an honour to speak in this House on behalf of my constituents from Surrey North. I am glad to speak to this motion in particular, Motion No. 503, introduced by the member for Simcoe North. It is an important piece of legislation, and I will try to connect its importance to B.C.

Basically, the motion calls for the government to consider the advisability of an investment to improve the navigability of the Trent-Severn Waterway near Lock 45. My colleagues in the NDP have conducted some consultations with the stakeholders and rights holders and first nations to look at this project, and most of the people who would be affected by this improvement seem to be open

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to the idea. However, there are some concerns as to what the next steps are. I hope the member for Simcoe North will keep the community informed and get it involved in the consultations in regard to moving forward with this project.

The Trent-Severn Waterway is a canal route traversing southern Ontario cottage country and is a linear historic site of Canada administered by Parks Canada. It was formerly used for industrial and transportation services and is now maintained for recreational and tourism purposes. I will tie this to how important tourism is not only to people in southern Ontario but also to waterways that are off British Columbia and in British Columbia.

There are numerous issues contributing to the need for this to be done. The channel has many rocks, it requires relatively sharp turns, it is not wide enough for bigger vessels, and it is subject to unexpected currents seasonally. For these reasons, it is difficult for boaters to navigate through these waterways.

This project would help local communities. It would be of economic benefit. It is a small project, a small infrastructure investment in our local communities, and I commend the member for bringing this motion forward.

The bigger question is the lack of infrastructure development and lack of infrastructure funding allocation by the current government throughout the last six or seven years. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities estimates a deficit of hundreds of billions of dollars in infrastructure development in this country, yet we have seen budget after budget wherein infrastructure development has been cut in our communities and our cities.

As an example, Pattullo Bridge in Surrey, British Columbia, is 76 years old. The bridge was only to last 50 years, so it is already 25 or 26 years beyond its lifespan. The bridge is going to be built soon. We already have a bridge on the other side of Surrey, the Port Mann Bridge, which is tolled. As far as I know, that is the only toll bridge west of Ontario, and it is in British Columbia and goes directly into my riding.

The only proposals for the new bridge so far propose tolls, so both of the bridges going into my constituency will be toll bridges. In some of the other municipalities in the Lower Mainland, people are able to take another bridge that is not tolled, but we do not have that option. Those are the sorts of infrastructure investments that are required from the current government. I am talking about my constituency because my constituents are telling me that we cannot afford another toll bridge.

● (1155)

The minimum wage has not risen often in the last number of years. If people commute to work and have to go over the bridge, they have to pay between \$6 and \$8, depending on which bridge they take, and that cuts into making a living. It is hard on my constituents in Surrey North, because they basically depend on those bridges to go to municipalities north of the Fraser River.

Infrastructure investments are important because they help our communities grow. I would ask the government to look at projects like Pattullo Bridge, come to the table, and help communities invest in local jobs and local economies so that communities can grow.

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This project is going to be good for the economy of southern Ontario because of the money that will be received from tourism. It will benefit the entire cottage community. These are the kinds of investments that we need to make not only in Ontario but right across the country, but the government is lacking when it comes to putting dollars into our communities.

Dredging and widening this particular channel will make it more navigable for boats and the movement of goods. This would certainly help the tourism industry and spur on other economic activity. These are the kinds of investments we need in British Columbia. These are the investments we need in order to facilitate tourism and the movement of goods.

Tourism plays a huge role in British Columbia. Millions of tourists come into Vancouver to take cruise ships to Alaska. Tourism dollars drive a lot of the local businesses in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia. For that matter, many of my constituents work in the tourism industry.

Investments are needed not only in our waterways but in our small craft harbours as well. We need better facilities for local British Columbians and for tourists coming into British Columbia, but the government has not made sufficient investment in them. We have seen that many times in many budgets over many years. These small investments would spur on job growth in local communities.

The NDP always supports reasonable and responsible infrastructure investments that balance the economic, environmental, social, and legal concerns of our communities. We support infrastructure investment. I am hopeful that the government will step up in my community with regard to the Pattullo Bridge.

It is equally important when making these investments that we make sure local communities and first nations are consulted. We need to look at the impact of these investments in infrastructure on local communities.

I could talk about investing in our communities for hours, because I hear the concerns from my constituents. I want to bring to the House's attention the urgent need for investments in new infrastructure, whether it is in canals or bridges in my community or whether it is in the transportation needs of my community.

I urge the government to look seriously at these issues and make these important investments in our communities so that our communities can prosper.

• (1200)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am standing in support of this motion, mainly because I think it is time for us to seriously look at sensible, environmentally safe investments in our infrastructure. Here, we are talking about a lock that is going to have economic gains for the region. Not only will it benefit the cottage industry, it will benefit tourists. Industrialists around that area have no problem with this.

When I think about infrastructure, I think of the massive infusion of money that is needed in order to address transit, especially in Surrey, where we are in dire need of these additional resources, not only for environmental reasons, but for quality of life reasons. We have serious issues. I would also say that when we are talking about

dredging and getting this lock ready, it reminds me of the Fraser River, which goes through the edge of my riding, and the need that we have and that I hear about of the desalting that needs to take place.

The current government really believes in economic growth. If it was really committed, the number one thing that it could do right now would be to invest in infrastructure from coast to coast to coast. Every region has different needs. That is where the government needs to work with provincial and municipal governments as a team, because jobs are not plentiful. We have very high unemployment, and we know that the best stimulus to get the economy going is to invest in our infrastructure. The infrastructure then boosts our economy in other ways. In this case, it might be for tourism, and we know how much money tourism brings into our country.

In my riding, Surrey and the Newton area, as I mentioned earlier, investment in infrastructure might result in an effective public transit system. It would be a public transit system that makes life so much easier for people living in Surrey. They face traffic gridlock every morning and every evening. Do not only think about the number of hours that are wasted that people spend sitting in a car; think about how much damage is being done to the environment as well.

It makes good environmental sense. It makes good economic sense, because all of those hours sitting in the car could be spent being more productive at work. Those hours would also add to the quality of life. Just think of the joy on people's faces when they get to spend more time playing with their children or visiting their elderly grandmother.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): 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.

The hon. member for Newton—North Delta will have seven minutes remaining when the matter returns before the House.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

AGRICULTURAL GROWTH ACT

The House resumed from June 13 consideration of the motion that Bill C-18, An Act to amend certain Acts relating to agriculture and agri-food, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour, as always, to rise in this House, representing the people of Timmins—James Bay. I am very interested in speaking to Bill C-18, an act to amend certain acts relating to agriculture and agri-food.

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There are many elements in the bill, some to do with plant breeders' rights and some to do with payments for farmers. There are a number of elements I think need to be looked at. It is good for us to have a discussion in the House of Commons about agricultural policy. How do we support our producers, and how do we reassure consumers in the 21st century of the quality of foods that are being created in Canada?

I will start off by talking about my region of Timmins—James Bay. It is known for being mining country. Some of the greatest gold mines in the history of North America are founded in my region. That is why my family came to Timmins. They were immigrant gold miners. We had diamond mines in James Bay. The deepest base metal mine in the world is in Timmins backyard at Kidd Mine. It continues 50 years into production still, below 10,000 feet, which is an extraordinary feat of engineering. It shows that we have seen enormous changes in mining in the region.

We were always told that mining was a sunset industry. In the nineties, the common wisdom was that we cannot compete with lax regulations and we cannot compete with the third world. However, in Canada we have the highest trained professional workforce in the world. Canadian miners are at the forefront of all manner of mining exploration and development, certainly in terms of financial input. The other element is the regulatory regime that we have in Canada to ensure environmental standards and safety has created an environment where it is worth investing in Canada.

There are a number of issues to be dealt with in terms of mining, but the days when men were killed in the mines of Cobalt and Timmins, dying on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays, have changed dramatically. It still has not changed enough, but we are seeing the use of technology and innovation that have allowed us not just to continue to hold our own, but to become, once again, the world leader in terms of development. We are balancing the incredible resource wealth that we have with the need to always be innovative and find new ways to get deeper at the ore.

We have some similar issues in terms of agriculture. Agriculture in Timiskaming—Cochrane region is fundamentally different, because we have not had the boom-bust cycle that we have seen in mining. That is a very good thing in terms of building a long-term economy.

The northern end of the Timmins—James Bay region is known as the great clay belt. There is enormous potential for farmland in the great clay belt. The problem is, when it was opened up in the early part of the 20th century, many families attempted to make a living there and found it was just too cold, the seasons were too short, and the crop yields were not sufficient to allow these farms to succeed in the way they should have succeeded. As a result, many of the farmlands in the upper part of the Timmins—James Bay region began to atrophy and go back to dogwood and poplars. One by one the farmers started to leave. We maintained somewhat of a beef economy, but the overall balance in agriculture did not exist.

That was not so much the case in the southern part of my region, the little clay belt, which is Timiskaming. Timiskaming region in Quebec and Ontario shares an enormously wealthy farm belt that has given incredible balance in terms of the economic development in our region.

For many years the basis of this economy was dairy. The supply management system on the Quebec and Ontario sides has certainly anchor communities like Earleton, Englehart, and New Liskeard area. With a dairy economy, we know year to year what we will get. We have seen ups and downs in the beef industry. I was first elected in 2004 during that really difficult period that our beef industry was undergoing. It was a shock to the system of individual beef farmers when they could not get their cattle to market, could not get it to the United States because of the BSE crisis. It certainly created major problems for the development of the region.

• (1205)

In terms of cash crops, Timiskaming has always had a mixed-grain economy, but over the last 15 years we have seen a transformation in the regional food economy because we are getting better yields, such as with soybeans. We are seeing corn production in areas where corn was never seen before. This has started to create a potential for development in the north that people had previously written off.

The acreages down in southern Ontario are becoming more expensive and more difficult to farm, especially as rural butts up against suburban. There is pressure on the rural with land prices in the south being so extraordinary. It is very difficult to maintain the traditional notion of the family farm when there are opportunities to sell that land and move north, which is what we have been seeing.

However, it is now not just in the Timiskaming region, but once again, because of better crop yields, we are starting to see agriculture moving back into the areas up around Val Gagné, Black River-Matheson, up toward Cochrane and over through Timmins, which had been atrophying for years. We are now seeing a large potential new growth of mixed crops, barley, grain, soybeans, canola, and corn. This is an important anchor for development in our region.

In terms of what is happening agriculturally, we have had two important transformations. In the upper Black River-Matheson area, a number of Amish and Old Order Mennonite communities are starting to establish themselves. We are seeing barns being built where there were no barns before. We are seeing tile drainage on land that did not have tile drainage. Once tile drainage is put onto a northern farm, the crop yields are going to increase exponentially.

The other really important element is that we have seen in so many of our rural regions the loss of the value added, such as the local operations that did the canning and such.

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For years, we had the Thornloe Cheese plant, run by Parmalat. People used to stop off the highway. I remember that it was around 2005 or 2006 when I got a call from the Parmalat owners who said that they were pulling out. They were done with our little community. I thought, fair enough, they had to make a business decision. I called John Vanthof, who is now a provincial member of Parliament, but he was the head of the Board of Dairy Farmers then. I asked John if we could win this fight, and he said that, yes, we could win. We called the Parmalat owners back and said that they could leave, but we wanted the dairy cheese quota to stay here. Of course, they laughed and thought it was an absurd concept. However, we said that we wanted the dairy quota to stay. If it could be run by a local conglomerate, then we wanted to buy into that cheese quota so that we could run the plant. After much negotiation, Thornloe was reopened as a local regional cheese producer.

What happened out of that is indicative of a need to balance between very large corporate interests and the need for local interests. Thornloe began to innovate and create all manner of new and local cheeses, and get a new market share. The products are now being sold in halal and kosher markets in Toronto. This has been a real success story for us. I think these are the things that we need to learn when we look at agriculture.

There are a number of elements in Bill C-18 that speak to the issue of patent rights as we create new crop yields and the need for regulatory changes to cover breeding animals under the advance payments program. These are things, if we ensure that they are done right, that will provide security for innovation, new research, and for the producers who are buying seeds and animals, and wanting to try the new yields that are coming forward.

There are number of concerns out there that are important to raise in Parliament. This is about consumer confidence. Some of them have to do with the notion of plant breeders' rights. There is a sense out there in the general public that they do not trust what is happening in terms of GMOs. They do not trust what is happening in terms of the larger food economy.

Just this past month, I was in Timmins at a rally against Monsanto and GMOs. Now, Monsanto certainly does not have a good reputation with its history with Agent Orange and creating PCBs. However, I think what brought this issue initially to the public's attention in terms of the scientific manipulation of gene matter to create new varieties was the effort to create the terminator seed. The terminator seed was a solution it came up with as a way of not having to argue with farmers about having to buy seed the next year. One would just simply put a so-called suicide gene into the seed, which would give one yield and then die.

● (1210)

That might have seemed like a smart idea at corporate headquarters, but it has hit ordinary citizens not just in Canada and North America, but across the world as something that is fundamentally flawed, that one could mess with genetics to create a so-called suicide gene. There was a huge pushback against this effort. It scared the public away. People said, "Wait a minute. What is happening with our food?"

We are seeing, especially across North America, a growing awareness about the food economy and the need to ensure some

manner of security for food so that we are getting good quality food and there is a sense of the importance of the local economy. Over the years, we have seen a move to this larger and larger sense of agribusiness, but consumers want food that is safe, food that is good. They like the notion of locally grown food. Consumers want to be heard on these issues.

When we talk about new crop varieties, we need to reassure the public that we are looking at these issues seriously, that we are looking at them from the point of view of what creates innovation in order to create better yields, so that our communities can be fed, but also ensuring an overall balance. Nowhere is this more important than with what is happening with the bee population around the world.

We know that there has been a massive die-off of bees. We have seen a 35% decline in bees in Ontario alone. What does that mean for us? I do not think people have any idea what it would mean if there was a substantial die-off of bees, especially with the role bees play in pollination. They are the fundamental players in the entire food cycle. Protecting bees really has to be job one. It does not matter what we do with our food economy; it does not matter how much tile drainage we put in; it does not matter how many plans we put forward. If we do not have God's little creatures actually making this all possible, we are going to be in for a serious shock in our ability to feed ourselves and the world.

We have seen studies done by the *American Journal of Science*, the American Chemical Society's *Environmental Science & Technology Journal*, and the Harvard School of Public Health that identified neonics, the form of pesticide that is being used on about 142 million acres of corn, wheat, soybeans, and cotton seeds. This is a corporate construction that was seen as a way of improving crop yields by putting these pesticides on corn, wheat, and soy, which is certainly the backbone of the U.S. agricultural economy and much of Canada's agricultural economy.

It is not that this was done out of malice; side effects sometimes happen. If this leads to the death of the bee population, there have to be measures to deal with these pesticides, because it is not good for the long-term economy. There will certainly be corporate interests and lobbyists who will say that we should hold off and study this in another three or five years. Consumers and citizens want clear action. They want to know that parliamentarians hear these things. There is a sense out there that big agriculture has the ear of government, and the average person does not. There is a real uncertainty.

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What we need to do as parliamentarians is say that we hear the public's concerns. We also understand the need to have regularity and certainty in the agricultural development of our economy. Agriculture is not a yesterday economy. Increasingly, with climate change and global uncertainty, the role of Canada as the world's breadbasket, as we used to call ourselves, the ability to create food to sustain our population is going to become increasingly important.

There are a number of elements in Bill C-18 which are timely, but there are also a number of elements in the bill, particularly on the issue of plant breeders' rights, how seeds are saved, and what it actually means in terms of establishing some manner of certainty for producers, patent holders, and also for the people who have the God-given right to plant and grow and should be able to maintain that right, that we can raise in Parliament that they need to be identified at committee as to how they will actually play out on the ground.

We are certainly willing to move this bill to committee. We think there is some merit.

• (1215)

The issue of farmers' privilege is certainly a big question. Farmers' privilege is interesting because it allows farmers to save seeds for the purpose of reproduction, but it is not clear whether or not they have to pay to store it, which would effectively negate that privilege. That would seem to be an odd element. Also, there is the question of where the resale is. Is it on the original purchase of the seeds, or on the resale value of what is actually produced as a crop? These are things we feel need to be looked at.

In terms of the advance payments program, there are a number of elements. Again, it is odd that we jump from plant breeders' rights to the advance payments program. The government has thrown in a whole manner of elements to deal with agriculture in one bill. It is sort of a mini omnibus bill. We are dealing with a whole bunch of different elements.

There are new allowances under Bill C-18 that would allow multi-year agreements to reduce the administrative burden for those applying to the advance payments program in consecutive years. That would certainly make the program more efficient. If we had similar provisions in other areas I know it would certainly help.

The bill allows for regulatory changes to cover the breeding animals under the advance payments program, which could result in more opportunities for farmers to access the program. It increases flexibility for producers on a number of fronts, including security arrangements and proof of sale for repayment. All of this would certainly make this program more accessible to producers.

It would also allow program administrators to advance on any commodity in any region, which would provide more opportunities for producers to access the advance payments program. It would also allow repayments without proof of sale, better reflecting the fact that there is a perishable life to non-storable crops. Producers would be able to avoid having to sell products at an inopportune time, for example, at very low prices, in order just to meet their repayment requirements.

There is flexibility built into the mechanisms that we think are very interesting and respond to what we are hearing from the

Canadian Federation of Agriculture and a number of other farm organizations.

Bill C-18 also grants the government the ability to define new means of repayment. This could provide greater flexibility for producers, including in situations like farm liquidation.

These are all very good elements.

I want to go back to the international protocols that have been put in place through the World Trade Organization, through international agreements. What we need to do is ensure that these are not simply there to benefit very large corporate interests, like Monsanto, but also respect the variety of agricultural experience across the world, including the third world.

We know there has been a huge issue about genetic contamination, the possibility that GMO crops could reach into other crops and affect them. Since 2005, there has been a GM contamination register in the United Kingdom.

The other issue is in India there has been a huge local fight back among farmers about what their plant rights are, and the fact that they have grown the kinds of crops they have for decades and centuries, and corporate control over them has led to a huge pushback. Some of these issues were raised.

Many of the Indian companies are locked into joint ventures and licensing agreements, and concentration over the seeds sector was the result. It has been said that Monsanto now controls 95% of the cotton seed market through its genetically modified organisms in India; that seed which had been the farmers' common resource suddenly has now become, as is being accused by a number of Indian farmers, the intellectual property of Monsanto; that the open pollinated cotton seeds have been displaced by hybrids, including genetically modified hybrids. Cotton used to be grown as a mixture with food crops and other crops, but pressure has been put on to do mono-cropping. That certainly may have restored some measure of yields in India, but on the issue of mixed crops and how farmers grow their crops, particularly cotton, local farmers feel larger corporate control has taken over their ability to control their own land.

• (1220)

These are questions about economics, but they are also about agriculture and the basic issue of civil society and where we go. We are certainly interested in seeing this issue being brought forward and more closely examined at committee.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I did enjoy the member's remarks. He touched on a lot of very valid points.

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If we could sum up this bill with three or four words, we could call it the good, the bad and the ugly. There are some good points in it, and there are some worrisome points as well. The biggest overall concern with this bill is the global corporations having so much control over the family farmers around the world.

One of the areas that I am concerned with in the bill is the plant breeders' rights aspect of it. I have not actually determined in my own mind where we can go on it.

The minister talks about farmers' privilege, and the member mentioned that as well. I believe it should be farmers' right to retain and reproduce their seed. What implications will that have on the international agreement we have already signed as a country? I do think it needs to be discussed a lot more. How does the member see, or is there any way of getting around, ensuring that farmers have rights and not just privileges? It should be their rights. They are the ones who are doing the producing. How does the member see getting around that in the context of the international agreement?

• (1225)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, that was an excellent question. I have worked with the member on agriculture and he has a wide background on this.

The hon. member has touched on the issue of the rights being afforded in this bill are corporate rights. Everybody knows that a privilege is something that can be taken away. A right is something that one fundamentally has.

I would argue that since time immemorial there has been the fundamental right of the farmer working with nature itself. This is the most fundamental relationship that has existed since humans first stopped hunting mastodons, and maybe even back then. It is that relationship between the grower and what is grown.

Now that there are limits or an ability through international trade agreements to determine how that is done is very disturbing. We know that around the world there has been a pushback against the larger bodies that tell us at the local levels what we can and cannot do.

That is why we need to get this bill to committee, so we can actually look at the legislation and determine whether or not we are actually trading away the God-given rights that farmers have had since time immemorial. That has to be protected.

The devil is in the details, and the devil will certainly be in the details of this bill.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member, as usual, has widened the scope of his speech to talk about his constituency and about the rights and interests of all of our agricultural producers in Canada.

The member made a very important point. Typical of the legislation the government has been bringing forward is a law which includes provisions for the possibility of regulations to be promulgated.

A more open and transparent process would be to table the legislation and at the same time reveal what those regulations may say so that members of Parliament, the agricultural producers who

are impacted, and the breeders could know what the government proposes.

I wonder if the member could expand a bit more on the fact that it is nice the bill is being tabled, but there are two significant areas where there will be regulations, and one could potentially severely limit these privileges to the producers.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to sound like I am getting all biblical but it does say in the Book of Luke that what is done in the dark shall be seen in the light and shouted from the rooftops.

This is the problem with regulation. We have a few hours of debate on something as substantive as the issue of plant breeders' rights and how the rights of farmers and the rights of an ecological system for growth balances off the larger corporate interests and larger international trade interests. Then it goes to committee, and then it is voted on. Then all the little booby traps can be brought in through regulation, which the public will have no ability to hear.

When we deal with these issues, the public looks to us as parliamentarians to try to find a reasonable solution. Do I know how to balance off plant breeders' rights with what is called the farmers' privilege? I think it should be the farmers' rights. No, because it is in those details. They are very complicated.

The issue that it can be dealt with in regulation after the fact means there can also be the problem of certain interests that will have the ear of the people writing the regulations while the public is sitting on the outside. I do not think that is in the interests of the public.

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, GP): Mr. Speaker, we do indeed have an omnibus bill on agriculture here of 108 pages, with very small font. It is unbelievably important stuff.

To again join my hon. member for Timmins—James Bay, and to get biblical, the part that particularly worries me is that the Creator put these genes on the planet. For us to be saying that a large corporation can control them, monopolize them, and modify them in ways that cause serious potential problems is worrisome to me.

In terms of process, what worries me is that with a bill of this scope, we have five hours to discuss this in a House where the number of people with a scientific background is in the single digits. We desperately need to have expert testimony. We need to have more information.

I would like the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay to give us his thoughts on the process of ramming and cramming this bill through in such a last-minute, draconian fashion.

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• (1230)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, there are very profound questions here. Internationally, we see the whole fight of indigenous cultures who have had their traditional medicines for years, and suddenly they are patented. Maybe it is okay to patent something that was used for hundreds of thousands of years that can benefit all of humankind. There is a public good there. The question is whether the original people who created and used those natural resources should not be disenfranchised, in the same way farmers should not be disenfranchised, in the same way the consumer should not be disenfranchised if Monsanto decides that it will start sticking fish genes into tomatoes and does not want the public to know. These are all issues that as human society we need to be deeply involved in.

To take all these elements of an agricultural bill, some of which are very positive and will help our producers, and throw them all together, ram them through, and not have sufficient time to do the review, when we need technical experts and people of scientific and cultural backgrounds who can talk about what will work and what will not, is not what the Canadian public sends us here to do.

We see in this House the idea that debate is always being called stalling and filibustering. Debate is about raising these issues so the people back home who are listening can say, “I understand what’s going on. I see that there are questions that need to be answered.” Then they look to us to be able to provide those answers at the end of the day. If we as parliamentarians are not able to do our job, if we are not able to do the due diligence, how then do we go back to the public and say, “Be reassured, the Parliament of Canada did the right thing with this legislation?”

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have talked a lot in the House about the different areas of expertise we have as members of Parliament. We come here with different backgrounds. Some of us are experts in academic issues or technical issues. Some of us are just experts in what it is like to come from our regions. We are very much like Canada in that way, and like Canadians, we have different backgrounds.

My background is not agriculture, and so the bill has been a real learning experience for me. I want to share with the House where my learning experience on the bill actually started, because I will be honest, the bill was not on my radar when it was first tabled. Look at the fact that I am a member of Parliament for Halifax, an urban centre. There are a few fishing villages in my riding, but I really do not represent any agricultural areas.

I talk often in the House about how important it is for us to talk to constituents to tap into their expertise but also to hear about their hopes or dreams or to hear about their fears about different pieces of legislation. That is exactly what happened to me when the bill came up. I looked in my calendar one day and saw that members of the Food Action Committee, which is a committee of the Ecology Action Centre, had scheduled a meeting with me to talk about Bill C-18. I am not one to even remember bill numbers very quickly, so I had to look it up. I realized that it made sense that the Food Action Committee wanted to talk to me about the bill, which is called an act to amend certain acts relating to agriculture and agri-food, but I wondered why they wanted to talk to me about it.

I immediately contacted my friend and colleague, the member for Welland, who is our agriculture critic, and he forwarded a lot of material about what Bill C-18 sought to do or purported to do. He walked me through some of the key issues for him as our critic and also very likely for the Food Action Committee.

I went ahead with the meeting and met with Jonathan Kornelsen and Mary Ellen Sullivan, and it was a typical MP meeting, where folks say that these are the issues with the bill and ask what the NDP’s position is on it. They presented me with a petition entitled “The Right to Save Seeds”. It had 145 signatures on behalf of the Food Action Committee. They explained that their friend had three pages of petitions and could not keep up. He was at a grocery store in downtown Halifax and quickly ran out of pages because people were so passionate about this.

The petition addresses the agricultural growth act portion of Bill C-18. It has raised serious concerns among farmers and consumers. They put together the text of the petition with the help of the National Farmers Union website.

Before I get to the content of the meeting or of the bill, I want to read something from a blog Mary Ellen Sullivan contributes to called “Adventures in Local Food”. I want to read it because if there is any message I have tried to communicate during my time as a member of Parliament, it is that politicians are just members of our communities. We are not experts. We rely on the expertise of our communities. We want to talk to people and have our constituents shape our views on policy and legislation, even if we are going to disagree in the end. It is so important to be in touch, and I am always thankful when people do that.

On the blog, “Adventures in Local Food”, Ms. Sullivan wrote about our meeting. She wrote:

Our meeting was a relaxed exchange of information, questions and discussion, with [our MP] advising us of the position of the NDP and the workings of the political process. Because we received more than 25 signatures she can present our petition in Parliament!

It was a great learning and rewarding experience for Jonathan and me. [She] instilled confidence in us that grassroots actions such as petitions, demonstrations, and meeting with your MP do have an impact. Politicians do take note of these actions.

I found that the NFU website provided excellent educational and action resources including background information on C-18 and other issues—just use the search box for issues you’re interested in. It gives advocacy suggestions including how to meet with your MP, and information sheets that can be given to them. NFU works in collaboration with such organizations as the Canadian Biotechnology Action Network (CBAN) on issues affecting farmers and consumers.

Meeting with [our MP] was a great education for us and gave us confidence to continue to take food action! I was delighted to have Jonathan join me—a fledgling FAC member with two meetings under his belt, a background in biology, experience working on a farm in BC, and lots of knowledge and passion. Glad he decided to see what’s going on in NS. We hope you’d be inspired to meet with your MP too. Learn about the issue and relax—our MP’s are working for us.

Government Orders

● (1235)

That is pretty inspiring. I am really glad that Mary Ellen Sullivan took the time to lay out that it is not difficult, that people can meet with their MPs, and that we are working for them. Let us sit down and relax. She actually says “relax”. I thought that was a great message.

Let us move on to the content. As members heard from Ms. Sullivan, we talked about the issues in this bill, including an issue that was very important to them. This was probably the main issue they wanted to communicate to me, and it was about the ability to save seeds. Members heard my colleague from Timmins—James Bay go into this quite a bit.

When people come and meet with us, they want to explain their perspective on different issues. They also want to hear what our perspective is, and they want to know what our party will do. Is it going to support this bill? Is it going to vote against it? What are people saying about it? They asked me my position. I explained to them, as I will explain to the House now, that this bill is problematic. It is another omnibus piece of legislation that would make changes to nine different pieces of legislation. Looking at them and breaking down what these changes are, and they are extensive, there are some we do support. There are other parts that, on their face, we oppose and find problematic.

What do we do when we are faced with this kind of situation? What do we do when we like some parts but think that other parts would do damage?

I think that our critic, the member for Welland, and his deputy critic, the member for Berthier—Maskinongé, have put a lot of thought into this. They have consulted with stakeholders, and they have done an excellent job of dissecting all the points in this bill to bring them to a balanced conclusion.

My colleague from Malpeque posed a question to my colleague from Timmins—James Bay and asked what the solution is. He has great expertise in this area. He said that we are not sure where we are with farmers' privilege. How do we balance that? How do we figure out farmers' rights versus farmers' privilege? That is a great question to ask. We do not always have all of those answers when we are here at second reading just fleshing out the ideas of a bill. It is so important that we bring this to committee and study it, listen to experts, and maybe try to come up with those solutions. I do not have some of the solutions before me right now, but I am eager to hear from my colleagues what some of those solutions might be.

I told Ms. Sullivan and Mr. Kornelsen that I was prepared to support the bill at second reading and that at committee we plan to work on making the problematic aspects of this bill better. We plan to try to fix the problems. I have to admit that I am not overly optimistic that the Conservatives will listen to our proposal, but I refuse to be cynical about this and just give in. I do think we have to try.

What are the problematic aspects of this bill? I have received a number of postcards from constituents speaking out against the bill. In particular, I have received a lot of postcards from a postcard campaign on the issue of farmers' privilege. On the front of the postcard, it says:

Save our Seed

Stop Bill C-18! Farmers' age-old practices of saving, reusing, exchanging, and selling seed are in jeopardy.

The postcard has some really compelling language in it. It says:

[The bill], now before the House of Commons, would allow the biggest seed companies in the world to exercise almost total control over seed in Canada. These companies would also be able to charge royalties on a farmer's entire crop. The Bill includes power to make regulations that would quickly undo or severely limit the so-called “Farmers Privilege” to save seed. This means Canadian farmers would pay giant corporations hundreds of millions each year for the right to grow a crop.

Canadians do not want multinational seed and chemical companies like Bayer, Monsanto, DuPont, Dow and Syngenta to control our seed, and ultimately, our food system.

I am asking you, as my democratically elected representative, to safeguard Canadian farmers' right to save, reuse, exchange and sell seed by taking all actions necessary to stop Bill C-18.

● (1240)

That is pretty passionate. They are not asking for a rewrite here; they are saying to stop.

I want to thank some of my constituents who have reached out to me on this, including Tessa Gold Smith, Jim Guild, Herb and Ruth Gamborg, Steve Burns, Aaron Eisses, Mark McKenna, Josh Smith, Elisabeth Gold and Peter Gravel. All these folks have signed onto this, saying that we should stop Bill C-18.

I sympathize with their demand to stop this bill, even though I will support it at second reading. This is one of these balancing acts that we have to play from time to time. When I sat down with Jonathan and Mary Ellen and said that there were some aspects of this bill that we would support, they asked me which parts.

I believe there are some pieces of this bill, like putting stronger controls for products that are being imported or exported. There are new strengthening of record keeping requirements, whether for plants, for feed or for fertilizer. There are some safety measures in there to prevent risks to human, animal and environmental health. One big part that everybody could support is prohibiting the sale of products that would be a subject of a recall order from the CFIA. That is a great step toward strengthening our food safety system. It makes me wonder why that has not been there all along.

It is a balancing act to figure it out, so we will try to get it to committee.

I agree with constituents of mine who have written to me in this postcard campaign about the farmers' privilege piece. I have two more letters that I received from some constituents about this issue.

One is from Margaret Murray, who says:

No doubt you have done some investigation on Bill C-18. I'm wondering what the NDP issue is on this important issue. Multi-nationals like Monsanto MUST be curtailed in their attempts to 'own' what ought to be in the public domain. Taking a renewable common resource and turning it into a non-renewable patented commodity is simply wrong!

I have also heard from Cynthia O'Connell, who asked me to oppose Bill C-18 as it would harm organic farmers on whom she depended for organic food.

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Even though the bill is ostensibly about agriculture, it really would impact consumers, including consumers in urban centres like Halifax, which I represent. It is capturing the hearts and minds of people. They are writing to me.

As I said, there is a balance that has to be met here. There would be some benefits of the changes found in the bill, like enhancing public accessibility and transparency when it comes to plant breeding and, for example, protecting researchers from infringement of plant breeders' rights. However, the issue of farmers' privilege is significant, and that is the number one issue about which people have written to me.

Let us get to farmers' privilege and what the NDP would see as very problematic.

Farmers' privilege does not include the stocking of propagating material for any use. What does that mean? Even if farmers are able to save seed for the purpose of reproduction, it looks like they may have to pay to store it, which would effectively negate that privilege. Earlier, when I said that we did not necessarily have all the answers when we came here at second reading to debate the bill, I am very clear when I say it looks as if farmers would have to pay to store it. I would want to explore this issue and find out from the minister if that was actually the intention. If it is not the intention, then maybe that could be fixed with a simple wording change.

The farmers' privilege also would not extend to the sale of harvested material. This means that farmers would likely still be required to pay for the sale of the crops grown from farm-saved seed. It also means that plant breeders could potentially generate revenue on a farmer's entire production rather than just on the seed purchased to grow the crop. This could have significant impacts on the profit margins of farmers.

• (1245)

Some farmers say that paying a royalty base on what they produce instead of on the seed that they buy actually reduces their risk. If they harvest a poor crop, they pay less with an end-point royalty compared to paying upfront when they buy seed. Even in what I am presenting to the House right now, I am a bit unsure, so this is something we would need to explore further as well.

Bill C-18 includes amendments that would allow the CFIA to make changes to farmers' privileges through regulation, not through legislation, and that is an important distinction. This means that the government could significantly hinder these rights at any time without parliamentary oversight.

Not a lot of people understand the difference between regulation and legislation. Legislation would have to come before the House where we would debate it and vote on it. There is a process involved. Regulation is just an order in council. What does that mean? Effectively it means that the Prime Minister's Office has written something down and given notice, but it is not democratic. It is an interpretation of the legislation, and who knows where that comes from. In theory it is the Governor in Council, but in reality I doubt that is the case. There is no parliamentary oversight, and these rights could be changed at any time, at least that is my reading of the bill.

Allowing for farm saved seeds is an optional exemption under UPOV 091, the International Union for the Protection of New

Varieties of Plants that we signed in 1991. That means Canada could disallow farm saved seed and still fulfill its international obligations under the agreement.

Bill C-18 goes so far as to define what is meant by a document, so that is good because there is some detail there. However, it does not give a definition of farmer, which is problematic. This would have some important implications for the enforcement of farmers' privilege. It goes to the root of the issue here, especially given that Bill C-18 would allow the government to make significant changes to the farmers' privilege provisions through regulation. There we are again. Changes could actually be made, without any parliamentary oversight, through regulation, and there is no definition of what a farmer is.

Given the government's recent changes in Bill C-4 that limit farm loss deductions to people whose primary income is from farming, this is an area where more clarity is needed. Do I count as a farmer if I am participating in a community garden in downtown Halifax? I am not sure.

To prevent the privatization of existing varieties, we have to ensure a variety registration system that would ensure that new crop varieties would be as good or better than existing ones. We also have to ensure that farmers will continue to have access to existing cereal varieties that are developed by public plant breeders.

I will finish up with a couple of other concerns about the potential legal burden for producers.

The Canadian Federation of Agriculture has called for protections for producers from claims of patent infringement with respect to natural or accidental spreading of patented plant genetic material, but they are not included in Bill C-18.

Given that the expansion of breeders' rights under Bill C-18 would be so significant, it is likely that farmers would face increased and expensive litigation. There is no provision in the bill to ensure that legal fees do not impede farmers' defence in these cases.

That is the overview of what my constituents in downtown Halifax have written to me about. There are other issues in the bill which I am sure members will hear about from other members of Parliament, but that is the big one for the folks who I represent.

While I will be supporting this legislation at second reading, as I have pointed out, we have to watch this closely. We really have to push to change this, to make amendments to the bill to protect farmers. I look forward to being able to do that at committee.

Government Orders

● (1250)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased the New Democrats have not adjourned the House, or attempted to adjourn the House. That is a positive thing.

Next thing is that we have good pieces of legislation. When I say “good”, I should qualify that. This legislation attempts to make changes to nine other pieces of legislation. The government's track record in making changes to legislation that impacts our farmers is not very encouraging. In fact, there are many other things the government could have done to work with a number of the changes that it would put into place through Bill C-18.

The member highlights that in certain areas there are some aspects of the legislation that are positive and would receive fairly decent support from our stakeholders, in particular our farmers. We within the Liberal Party are very grateful for that. However, there are other aspects that are not.

The concern has to be that we have, yet again, this large bill before us that that would change to several pieces of legislation.

Would the member not agree that it would have been far better off had the government done its homework and worked with our different communities and stakeholders to come up with what should have been several pieces of legislation? This way we probably would have had better and easier passage on some of the more positive aspects of Bill C-18.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for qualifying the word “good”, because we still have not said that this is good legislation. Yes, there are some good pieces here, but there are some problematic pieces.

I am holding in my hand some notes that my colleague from Welland has put together for folks like me because this is not our area of expertise. These notes are really quite incredible, because they outline each act that would be amended. As we heard, there are nine different acts. This is omnibus legislation, so we have to look at it that way. There are amendments to the Feeds Act, the Fertilizers Act, the Seeds Act, the Health of Animals Act, and the Plant Protection Act. The notes set out what is good about it and what is problematic about it. There are amendments to the Agricultural Marketing Programs Act and the advance payments program. Again, the notes state what is positive about it and what is problematic about it. This is too much.

I go back to 2012 when we had two omnibus budget bills. The first one touched over 70 pieces of legislation, completely rewrote our environmental legislation and there were changes to the Assisted Human Reproduction Act, which is the law that governs whether we can sell or trade eggs or what we do with eggs, with sperm. This act was changed. I searched *Hansard* to see who debated it. I raised it once and one of my colleagues from Hamilton also raised it. It was just a mention. This is whether women can be surrogate mothers. The law was changed and it was buried in omnibus legislation.

God willing, there are no changes to our reproduction rights in this bill, but who knows? We will see.

● (1255)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her excellent speech.

Along those same lines, we are wondering why the Conservative government is making all these small changes and amending a number of different laws when they have yet to convince us that these changes are warranted and that they are in the interests of Canadians. Today we are speaking on behalf of Canadians, and farmers in particular.

What does my colleague think about the fact that Bill C-18 goes so far as to define what is meant by a document but does not give a definition of farmer? There will be a significant impact on farmers' privilege.

Does she think it is reasonable for the government to be amending one definition but not defining the term “farmer” when this bill touches on the importance of farmers' privilege? I am concerned that this will create loopholes in the system.

[*English*]

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the advocacy that he does on behalf of his constituents here in the House. He is here talking about the bill. He is always here raising issues that impact his constituents, and I think he should be commended for it.

He should not take my word for it. He should take the word of some of the experts out there. For example, there is Ann Slater, first vice-president of the National Farmers Union, and an Ontario farmer. She argues that the government's changes to plant breeders' rights will turn the customary practice of farmers saving and reusing seeds as part of normal farm activity into privilege, and that privilege could easily be revoked in the future.

Dominique Bernier, from AmiEs de la Terre de Québec, said that the bill significantly weakens farmers' ancestral rights, by forcing them to pay allowances to agro-industrial giants on the entirety of their harvest. However, the marketing of new crop varieties by the big breeders rests on a world heritage, the patient selection over a thousand years of crops by the succeeding generations of farmers.

There are people raising problems with the bill who have expertise.

The member mentioned the omnibus nature of the bill. To get back to that, there are people saying positive things about the bill. However, it is not a dispute. It is not, “I think that this policy *x* is good; I think this policy *x* is bad.” There are so many *x*, *y*, and *z*s in one piece of legislation that there are, I want to say competing points of view, but that is not it at all. People are saying they want *x*, but they do not want *y*.

It is quite amazing, when there are this many pieces of legislation that are being touched. I think that something needs to be done to stop this ramming through of so many changes.

Government Orders

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the speech by the member for Halifax on the bill. It is good to see people who have urban ridings talk about their concerns, and I think we all agree that it needs to go to a committee to be discussed.

My question relates mainly to her constituents' opinions on this. Where would those people who buy the food products that farmers produce rather than come from? The bill, as many of the bills that the government has put before this House, has transferred a lot of control away from primary producers to the corporate sector.

We have seen the results of the changes to the Canadian Wheat Board this winter. Farmers used to receive about 87% of the export price; now they are receiving about 48% of the export price. The corporate sector is gaining there.

I would point out to the member that, in 2002, Canada ratified the United Nations International Treaty on Plant Genetic Resources for food and agriculture. Canada was a signatory to that. In that agreement, it was agreed not to limit any rights that farmers have to save, use, exchange, and sell farm saved seed and propagating material, subject to national law that is appropriate.

My question for the member, because she does represent a lot of urban constituents, is on their views. Where would her constituents rather see that their produce comes from? Who would they like to see in control of that produce, family farmers, or the big corporations like Monsanto?

• (1300)

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I am glad the member for Malpeque pointed out that I am from an urban riding. We are the consumers. One might not think that we are necessarily connected to the land, but in fact we are quite connected to the land. We can see that in the incredible popularity of our farmers market, the Halifax Seaport market. We can see that with the incredible popularity of a store called Local Source, which only sells local products.

At the farmers market in Halifax, we will not find oranges. There are farmers, producers, meatmongers, and fishermen selling their local products.

Absolutely, without a doubt, my constituents want to see those rights and privileges kept with the local family farm. It is incredibly important to us as urban consumers.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

Unfortunately, I have only 10 minutes to talk about this omnibus bill. Obviously, I am not going to have enough time to say everything I want to say about it. However, I will still try to explain to those watching at home how Bill C-18 will affect them. Farmers and those who depend on this industry will want to listen closely so that they can hear the details of the bill.

The government will boast about this bill, saying that it is good for Canada's economy and the agricultural sector, but like every other omnibus bill, it has some good points and some bad points. The NDP feels it is important that this bill go to committee. Although everyone has concerns, as do I, we will still be voting to send this

bill to committee so that some consideration is given to the worthwhile suggestions and good amendments that we will be proposing in order to fill in the gaps.

As I said to my colleague from Halifax earlier, Bill C-18 defines what is meant by “document”, but it does not give a definition of “farmer” even though it is a bill about farmers' privilege. We just cannot understand why the government introduced such a badly written bill.

Maybe the government ran out of time. We know it is a little panicky these days, so much so that it decided the House would have to sit until midnight to discuss more bills. That is fine by me. I spent three nights here debating bills until midnight, and I am happy to be debating this one this morning.

My colleague from Halifax is from a lovely, more urban part of the country that I have visited several times. I myself am from Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, a rural part of Quebec. Saguenay, the largest city in the region, is the seventh-largest city in Quebec. It is a small urban centre. Many of our industries are based on resource regions, including forestry, tourism and agriculture.

I myself have a proud family history of farming. My paternal grandfather was a farmer, and we still have our family land, which is now shared by my many uncles, aunts and cousins. Even my brother, who got the farming bug when he was very young, spends a lot of time on the family land. It is not so much a place for growing grain. The grain grown there is used for the cows. The family farm is mainly about dairy production with a little beef cattle on the side.

I therefore have some expertise to offer to this debate. The Conservatives would have us believe that the NDP is out of touch with reality, but I would say that the Conservatives are the ones who are not listening to the public. People in farming in particular have some concerns about this. A number of them have sent letters or emails to our constituency offices. Today, we are pleased, as New Democrats, to help them make their voices heard here in Ottawa.

Bill C-18 is another Conservative omnibus bill. This time, the Conservatives are proposing amendments to nine different laws. We support some of those amendments, but have some serious concerns about others. It is important to note, however, that unlike the omnibus budget bill, which is a hodgepodge of legislative measures, the proposed amendments in Bill C-18 all have to do with agriculture and, in many cases, make the same changes to different laws. The Plant Breeders' Rights Act is the first law to be amended. I will list the main amendments proposed in this bill then explain the pros and cons of each.

• (1305)

One of the key changes is to move toward ratifying the 1991 Act of the International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants.

Then there is the amendment to extend the scope of breeders' rights for the varieties that they develop, and to increase the opportunities for breeders to collect royalties for their new varieties throughout the value chain.

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Essentially, Bill C-18 includes the following new exclusive rights for breeders: the right to reproduce material, the right to condition, sell, export or import material, the right to use any other plant variety whose production requires the repeated use of the plant variety, and the right to stock propagating material for the purpose of exercising other plant breeders' rights.

The bill also extends the term of the grant of plant breeders' rights from 18 years to 20 years, except in the case of a tree, a vine or any category specified in the regulations, in which case the term is extended to 25 years.

There are also new provisions that grant farmers' privilege, enabling them to keep, condition and reuse the plant seed on their own land. It should be noted that this privilege is not extended to the storing of seed or to the sale of harvested material from protected seed.

Bill C-18 also grants the Canadian Food Inspection Agency the ability to make changes, through regulation, under which the classes of farmers and plant varieties would no longer be covered by farmers' privilege. I was talking about farmers' privilege a little earlier and it is at the heart of this bill.

There is also the amendment that seeks to protect the rights of researchers to use patented materials as the basis for developing new varieties or for other types of research.

Then there is an amendment to give the public greater access to the registry of plant varieties, which is a major change from the previous act.

There is also an amendment that seeks to maintain the ability of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to grant compulsory licences to ensure that, in certain situations, plant varieties are available at reasonable prices, widely distributed, and of good quality.

However, Bill C-18 also includes an amendment that allows plant breeders to request that their plant breeders' rights be exempt from a compulsory licence.

The final amendment that this bill makes to the Plant Breeders' Rights Act is that it gives the government the authority to make changes governing exemptions from compulsory licensing through regulations, without legislative change.

One of the benefits of this bill is that variety developers would be able to see a return on investment for their plant breeding research efforts, providing incentives for an important sector of Canadian agribusiness.

The bill would also grant farmers' privilege to allow farmers to save the conditioned seed for use on their own farms. It would promote access for Canadian farmers to the results of private breeding research from Canada and other countries through more effective intellectual property rights.

It would protect researchers from infringement of plant breeders' rights.

It would enhance public accessibility and transparency when it comes to plant breeding.

Finally, the bill would maintain the existing compulsory licence system, providing some assurance that varieties can be made available at reasonable prices, widely distributed, and kept at a high quality.

However, we also have some concerns. Farmers' privilege does not include the stocking of propagating material for any use. As a result, even if farmers are able to save seed for the purpose of reproduction, they may have to pay to store it, which would effectively negate that privilege. I hope that the Conservatives will agree to compromise a little in committee.

Privilege also does not extend to the sale of harvested material. This means that farmers will probably have to pay for the sale of crops from farm-saved seed. That is a problem. It also means that plant breeders could generate revenue on a farmer's entire production, rather than just on the seed purchased to grow the crop. There will be an amendment in that regard. This could have a significant impact on farmers' profit margins.

In closing, Bill C-18 is an omnibus bill, and I disapprove of this type of tactic.

With respect to plant breeders' rights, the NDP believes that a balanced approach is essential. We will protect farmers, researchers and all Canadians. Although we understand the role that intellectual property rights play in fostering innovation, we want to ensure that Canadians can access and benefit from our agricultural heritage.

● (1310)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to highlight one aspect of the proposed legislation that I think it is important.

We all know that farm debt is a serious issue. A good part of that, at least out in the Prairies, occurred because of the humongous wheat piles that accumulated during the springtime and even as early as January from last year's harvest. We had excessive wheat, but the government was unable to ensure its adequate transportation to the B.C. coast, where empty ships were waiting. The government just dropped the ball on this issue, and it is related to farm debt.

The proposed legislation would affect the Farm Debt Mediation Act. The idea is try to provide more mediation processes or better clarity on the whole issue of the mediation process for farmers' debt. This is something that has potential, but one would like to think that the government did some consulting with the farmers to take on the issue in a more serious fashion. We know that the government was not able to deal with the situation of the wheat and the rail lines and so forth.

My question for the member is this: does he believe that this provision in the bill would assist in dealing with farm debt?

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[*Translation*]

Mr. Dany Morin: Mr. Speaker, my colleague has certainly asked a good question. However, I am a little skeptical about the measures established by the government. The Conservative government has shown on a number of occasions that it is rather incompetent, not just with respect to the home delivery of mail, but also with respect to the delivery of wheat to the different regions of Canada, as my colleague mentioned.

The Conservative government would obviously like us to believe that this measure will make the system stronger, but I have serious doubts about that. I am not an expert on wheat. My expertise and knowledge are more in the area of dairy production and livestock production for processed meats.

I would like to give the government the benefit of the doubt, but since we are dealing with the Conservative government, I think that it is very likely that it will shirk its responsibilities rather than carry them through.

• (1315)

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague.

I represent an urban riding that has a farmer's market, the Atwater Market. I also shop at the Jean-Talon Market, in Montreal. A number of farmers produce very special products. There are blueberries from the Lac Saint-Jean area and strawberries from Quebec. One of my favourites is an heirloom tomato farmer.

The changes to the wording of the act make it sound as though it is a privilege for farmers to be able to keep their own seeds and use them every year.

Does my colleague think that the change in terminology is worrisome for local farmers?

Mr. Dany Morin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. NDP colleague.

His point of view is one of a consumer, which is just as important to hear in this debate on this agri-food bill.

Intellectual property over seeds is one of our primary concerns. This concern, which I share, has been raised by a number of my colleagues.

The New Democratic Party is in favour of respecting the rights of the people who create these seeds. However, when we take a look at international news, we can see that giants like Monsanto have created genetically modified seeds that are spread in fields—sometimes organic ones—and on private farms, and these seeds contaminate other fields. This is doubly worrisome because non-genetically modified seeds are not protected and also because Monsanto and other companies could sue a farmer whose land is contaminated against his will.

Furthermore, consumers are increasingly looking for organic products and good products that taste like real food. That is why I think that this bill does not necessarily fix the problem.

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to this bill.

There have been several time allocation motions lately, and they have affected our speaking time. It is always nice to be able to talk about an issue regardless of what that issue is because that gives our constituents a chance to hear us talking about it. If we cannot talk about an issue, they will not hear about it because nobody is going to be running ads about agriculture in Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles. I would be really surprised if that happened.

My riding is primarily urban. We have lots of bungalows and apartment buildings. Like everywhere else in the country, much of the new construction is condos, and we have about 250 or 300 of those. Most of the people who live in these condos are older, middle- or upper middle-class people who sell their houses and decide to stay in Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles.

One of the first speeches I gave in the House in 2011 was about the abolition of the Canadian Wheat Board. That is why I am so glad to be here today to talk about agriculture once again. The NDP strongly opposed the abolition of the wheat board, which included mandatory consultations with farmers. The Conservative Party told us that consultation had been done because it had won the election with about 40% of the vote. That was my first experience in terms of votes, and it seems to be coming full circle in one of the last discussions we will have about agriculture before the next election.

I would like to talk about various issues. Talking about agriculture means talking about production, processing, markets, farmers' economic and financial situation, and research and development. We have to look at all of those elements. These are not things to be taken lightly.

In Quebec, 14% of our receipts are from agricultural land. There are 14,000 agricultural businesses across the province, and the crop production area is about 925,000 acres. Products are sold primarily on the food and animal feed markets. Quebec is Canada's second-largest producer of corn and soy, with 28% and 17%, respectively. These figures are from Statistics Canada.

To be more specific, corn is the number one crop, at 41%. Next comes soy at 29%, oats at 11%, barley at 9% and wheat at 6%. There are some other crops here and there that represent 2%. Production is increasingly specialized. There are 4,196 specialized farms in Quebec, which is a 23% increase over 1995. That means that there are 3,403 more specialized farms than there were in 1995. Specialized farms account for more than 50% of the cultivated acreage. The average farm size is increasing. Quebec very seldom turns to foreign markets because it is somewhat self-sufficient.

Production is the most significant market. In fact, animal feed makes up 90% of the market. The most popular crops are corn, barley and wheat. The main crop for human consumption is wheat, and the domestic market sits at one million tonnes. Next comes soybean production. As in the western provinces, a portion of production—320,000 tonnes—also goes to industrial processing, mainly for ethanol. Soy and canola are sometimes used as well.

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Nearly 695 establishments process grain for human consumption, including 41 flour mills and malting plants, 617 companies that produce baked goods and tortillas, and seven companies that make breakfast cereals.

• (1320)

It is important to point that out because there is a connection between food production and the well-being of the public.

I focused mainly on one aspect of the bill: the amendment to the Agricultural Marketing Programs Act and the advance payments program.

The advance payments program is a loan guarantee program that gives producers easier access to credit through cash advances. For a business owner, often the hardest part is having cashflow.

The advance payments program provides producers with a cash advance on the value of their agricultural products during a specified period. This helps them meet their financial obligations and benefit from the best market conditions and improves their cashflow throughout the year. This part of the bill is rather interesting.

The key changes in Bill C-18 are that it expands access to the program and, with the new provisions on multi-year agreements, will reduce the administrative burden for those—including the growing number of women working in agriculture—who apply to the advance payments program in consecutive years. This will make the program more accessible to producers and make program delivery more efficient.

Eligibility for the program will no longer be limited to those principally occupied in farming, so that farmers with significant off-farm income will also be able to access the program. For those working in agriculture, the season is very short and income is not very high. Therefore, it is often important for people working on a farm to have two jobs. This will allow farmers to work off farm as well, which is advantageous for producers.

Raising breeding animals will also be eligible for the advance payments program, and thus more farmers will be eligible. This is new, and it is fairly important, especially for young people graduating from an agricultural college. There are some very good schools in Quebec. Young people do not have access to credit or financing. What was excluded will now be included in the bill. I think that is an excellent idea.

Bill C-18 also increases flexibility for producers on a number of fronts, including security arrangements. It also provides more flexible means of repayment. That is also positive.

Program administrators will be able to provide advances for any type of commodity and in any region, which will provide more opportunities for producers to access the program.

Despite all of the good things I have mentioned, I also have some concerns. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture, among others, has been calling for an increase to the maximum amounts of advances, in order to address rising farm expenses, but unfortunately that was not covered in Bill C-18.

The changes also include a new licensing and registration regime for animal feed and fertilizer establishments; put in place stronger

controls for products being imported or exported; strengthen record-keeping requirements for feed, fertilizer and seed establishments and animal producers. The bill would also strengthen the record-keeping requirements for plants and potential risks from pests.

I am going to wrap this up. There is something important that has not yet been mentioned. There are three basic aspects that need to be considered when we are talking about development, namely the social, economic and environmental aspects. As we know, there has been a public outcry with respect to farmers saving seed. People claimed that bees have disappeared and that only certain companies could sell this specialized seed. This worries the population. For the time being, these concerns are not shared by the market in Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles because it is not an agricultural market. I am pleased to have had the opportunity to speak to this bill.

• (1325)

[*English*]

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am very surprised to hear Liberal and NDP members say this is a pretty good bill, with some flawed parts. I read all 108 pages of it quite carefully. It seems to me to be a very worrisome bill, bordering on a very bad bill, with a few token good parts. The inability to save and store seed, the GMO aspects of it, and the way it runs contrary to the interests of small farmers in favour of large multinational corporations, I would expect from the Conservatives, but I am surprised that these people want to send it to committee where, as we know, nothing will really get fixed.

Therefore, my question for the hon. member is this: why in heaven's name are they not just voting "no" for this very bad bill?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, I am disappointed that the member is no longer part of our party, but we cannot change the past.

In Quebec, the UPA has spoken out about the social, environmental and development aspects of this bill. We must all ensure that we consider what impact and consequences this bill will have on sustainable development.

As the member pointed out, there are some good parts in this bill. That is what I wanted to focus on this morning.

Government Orders

• (1330)

[English]

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, one of the issues that was raised earlier is what is happening with the corporate development of seeds and pesticides. We know of the threat it is posing now to bees with the neonicotinoids. We are seeing a 30% drop in bee populations in Ontario alone and similar drops in Quebec. This is one of the fundamental bases for ensuring agriculture and food security, yet it would be going up against a corporate interest that has enormous amounts of capital put into pesticides, plus going up against the soybean and corn industry.

I know Bill C-18 talks about the corporate rights, which are supposed to be balanced with the so-called privileges of the average farmers, but within that there needs to be a balance for the basic ecological sustainability of our agricultural system that the citizens of our country, and the citizens of the world, have a stake in as well.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague how she feels, that if we just push the bill with regulations and we do not have the time to look through it, that these larger questions are left unanswered.

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, that is why I spoke about some of the social, environmental and economic aspects of this issue. We are wondering where the bees are. Without them, there will be no fertilization and farming will suffer. Apple growers will suffer. Clearly, we have to find a way to successfully manage the environmental, economic, social and sustainable development aspects of this issue. It is extremely important to the future of our society.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, part of the legislation authorizes the minister of agriculture and agri-food to issue certificates setting out any information he or she considers necessary to facilitate certain exports. I wonder if the member might want to provide some thoughts on that issue.

Obviously, it has raised a great deal of concern among many farmers, wanting to get clarification. We did not get the clarification because, again, there is so much within this one piece of legislation that could have actually been taken aside and debated separately. Could she comment on that aspect?

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day: Mr. Speaker, Quebec is basically self-sufficient in that regard. The crops remain in the province. There are very few exports. If, on occasion, these products are shipped, they are sent to various parts of Canada. That is not a problem for Quebec.

[English]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine.

I have to say that I am absolutely stunned that thus far, and perhaps it will happen but perhaps not before we recess for the summer, we have not heard any Conservative members speaking to this bill. It is clearly a very important bill. We often hear those on the other side talking about how they are the party that represents

agricultural producers. We would welcome hearing from them, and hearing the perspectives of the farmers they allegedly represent.

There is not enough discussion in this place about the contribution made by agricultural producers to this country, particularly to the Canadian economy. I am proud to share that my ancestors were fishers and farmers. My great-grandma Sarah Duncan moved to Alberta from Saskatchewan when her husband died. She ran two homesteads, raised four kids, and got them all university educated.

The Steeves family, who I come from, emigrated from Germany, first to the United States and then to New Brunswick, in the mid-1700s. One of them became a Father of Confederation. They farmed since that date. My ancestors then moved to North Dakota and then, by wagon at the turn of the last century, up to Alberta.

My grandfather Pike, who came from a family of fishers in Newfoundland emigrated to this country in 1898. When he was relocated with the bank to Alberta, he was a person who liked to get his hands dirty in the soil and started a ranch in northern Alberta. Sadly, he lost that ranch in the 1930s. I did not discover that ranch until my uncle wrote a history about that.

I have very proud agricultural roots. I spent many childhood days visiting farmers with my father. I was in tears frequently because I could not have a lamb or a baby pig. I am also proud to share that I am an honorary member of the Preservation of Agricultural Land Association, based on the years that I worked with Alberta farm producers who fought long and hard for stronger protections for our prime agricultural lands.

This is a shout-out to the Prairie producers. I certainly value their contribution to this country. I would like to give particular thanks to Lynn Jacobson, who is with the Alberta Wheat Commission, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, and the Alberta Federation of Agriculture. He has been very generous with his time, in sharing his knowledge with me when I go through proposed legislation.

Bill C-18, as has been shared previously, is yet another omnibus bill. It is a very important bill. As I understand it, it changes nine laws. It is regrettable that the time allocated to us in this House does not give us the time to review the entire bill. My concern is that when this omnibus bill goes to committee, there will not be time to review the changes to all nine laws in detail.

Mr. Jacobson thinks that it would be useful for this bill to be taken out to the fields. Here we are tabling this law in this place, and discussing it, when many farmers are still seeding, weeding, and so forth, and are going to be harvesting right up until late fall. Let us hope that this bill is not rushed through, and that the farmers have an opportunity to genuinely participate.

Mr. Jacobson and others have expressed concerns to me that there has not been sufficient consultation to date. There has certainly not been any consultation on the regulations proposed under this bill.

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In the brief time I am allotted, I intend to speak to the plant breeders' rights section. It is an issue where we are hearing the most concerns.

In order for Canada to ratify the convention, Bill C-18 must actually enact legislation. That is precisely what is intended by Bill C-18. The legislation as it sits right now was put in place because Canada intended to ratify the previous convention on the protection of plant varieties. That was in 1978.

In 1991, a new convention, which extended greater protections to plant breeders, was signed by many nations. Since that date, Canada has not brought forward legislation. That was 13 years ago. Finally, the government, in its wisdom after being in power for six or seven years, has decided it will bring forward legislation. Let us hope it does not rush it through, because it is a very complex bill.

● (1335)

The difference between the previous convention and the current legislation of the proposed bill is it expands the rights of those who develop and essentially "copyright" seeds to include the exclusive right to produce, reproduce, condition, sell, export, import, or stock other propagating material. It is much more extensive than the previous rights, which were simply the copyrighted right to produce or sell the seed.

It is really important to recognize that debate has gone on around the world for many decades about whether or not there would be greater rights accorded to plant breeders—who, generally speaking, tend to be large corporations like Monsanto. It is absolutely critical for those extended rights to be balanced off with the rights of farm producers. It is generally recognized that saving, reusing, selecting, exchanging, and selling seeds have been understood to be a traditional practice and an inalienable right of farmers.

The concern with this bill, which extends greater rights to the plant breeders, is that the farmers' rights will be cut back. I am advised by the farmers who have been looking at this proposed legislation that there will be even deeper concerns if the Canada-EU comprehensive economic trade agreement is signed, because that bill could potentially extend the plant breeders' rights even further and thereby limit the farmers' rights.

I want to share what some of the issues are. In the bill are accorded certain of what are called "farmers' privileges". The only provisions in the bill on plant breeders that are accorded to farmers are the rights of the plant breeder, which are enforceable in civil law. As I understand this new legislation, the government will assume responsibility for enforcing these laws, with additional costs assumed by Canadians, including farm producers.

Privileges only—in other words, not really enforceable rights—are extended to the farmers, but they are very limited rights. They include allowing the farmer to use those seeds for the purpose of propagation, but the farmer then cannot sell the crop or the seeds. Many have suggested this is a very hollow privilege.

In addition, the law allows for even further limiting of this privilege by regulation, but the government has not yet revealed what it intends to do by regulation. There are concerns about that.

As I mentioned, the Canadian Federation of Agriculture submitted a brief on the bill. It is presumed that members of this group will be key witnesses at committee, and we encourage them to do so. They are concerned about claims of infringement. There are scenarios in which, for example, there can be drift of seed onto a farmer's land; if the farmer then collects that seed and replants it, and it happens to include some of the seed that is patented, under this law the plant breeder can go after the farmers and sue them.

Additional concerns have been raised, including some raised by Mr. Jacobson in the case of organic farmers. We have had a number of situations of complaints being brought forward by Canadian producers over GMO seeds drifting into organic farmlands, causing their crops to become contaminated and to diminish in value. It reduces their ability to market, certainly overseas.

There are concerns with the free trade agreement that would potentially allow for the seizure of a farmer's assets upon infringement. There is concern about costs imposed on the government, including farmers, to enforce this new law, and issues about compulsory licensing.

Right now, under law there is a provision for compulsory licensing. The plant breeder must ensure that the seeds are made available at a reasonable price and are widely distributed. There is a provision in this new law that would allow them to apply for exemption. What is the problem there? As with the other regulations under the act, there are no provisions to require consultation with the agricultural producers.

With that, I will close my comments. I look forward to questions on the bill. I look forward to the government opening up this dialogue to producers across our country.

● (1340)

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague made a comment that no Conservatives have spoken to the bill. She must not be following the debate. The minister himself introduced the bill in Parliament and spoke to it. I, as the parliamentary secretary, stood in the House and spoke to it, as did a number of other Conservative MPs.

We are the biggest proponents of the bill. It is the NDP members who seem to be conflicted on the bill. They are weighing one side, weighing the other, and then trying to walk straight up the middle to please both sides of their base.

This is an important bill for agriculture. It is an important bill for farmers. I call on the NDP to support the bill, wholeheartedly and 100%.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I guess I have smoked them out of the weeds. I am glad to see some members on the other side commenting on the debate today. It is very welcome.

I am not going to apologize for the fact that on this side of the House, we actually reach out to those who are impacted by the bills and find out what their issues and concerns are, which is precisely what my colleagues and I have done. Agricultural producers are telling me there are some significant issues with this bill, and they look forward not only to the opportunity to come to committee to discuss the bill but also to be consulted on the planned regulations.

There is nothing stopping the government, frankly, from distributing proposed regulations right now, even before the bill goes to committee. That would then mean that we could vote from a fully informed standpoint in representing the interests of our constituents.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize that the most significant concern the critic of the Liberal Party has brought to the floor is in regard to the size of the legislation. There are a number of pieces of legislation in one bill. We question why the government has taken this approach, given the importance of the farming community and the number of pieces of legislation that the bill would change. Many of those changes, in fact, could have been stand-alone pieces of legislation.

My question for the member is this: does she not agree that there are too many pieces of legislation being brought as a single piece of legislation? By doing that, are we not preventing the different stakeholders and others from participating in a more detailed discussion on the issues facing our farmers today?

• (1345)

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, as the member is aware, at the outset of my speech I raised concerns over the manner in which this bill has been brought forward. I repeat this concern over and over again when the government brings forward legislation in this way.

My particular concern is with legislation that allows for regulations that could deeply constrain even the privilege accorded to agriculture producers. As I mentioned, the law provides certain privileges for farmers to do certain things with seeds, subject to regulations, yet nobody knows what those regulations will say. A good number of measures in this bill allow for that.

Indeed, something as significant as plant breeders' rights merited debate on its own, let alone the eight other laws that would be amended by this legislation. Let us hope that the consultation in committee is extensive, and again I recommend that this bill be taken out to the fields of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk to the member about the licensing and registration system. This could require additional funding since measures will be implemented.

Do we have those additional funds? Could there be delays in granting licences and registrations to facilities because those funds are not available?

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, it is my understanding that unlike current legislation, this legislation introduces an increased role for the Government of Canada, and that means further expenditures. I have not had the time to check to see if the budget

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provides for these additional funds should this bill become law this year. It is important for that to be revealed. It certainly needs to be revealed at committee.

I am deeply troubled that we are going to use public resources to protect the rights of plant breeders but not necessarily public resources to protect what should be the rights of farmers. That is the area where we need more discussion. I am told by the producers themselves that they are discouraged that the government keeps cutting back on agricultural research funds. It certainly cut the funds for the research based in Saskatchewan and Alberta and it cut back on the community pastures. That is a sad day for the small producers of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, I have the pleasure of rising in the House to speak to Bill C-18, An Act to amend certain Acts relating to agriculture and agri-food. I am also proud to say that the NDP has decided to support the bill so that it can be studied more thoroughly in committee.

In our opinion, many aspects of the bill constitute progress for farmers and the agricultural community. However, we are concerned about certain other aspects of the bill. We will examine the bill in committee and propose amendments. We will see how we can work with the government to advance the cause of the agriculture and agri-food sector.

The NDP feels that this bill is massive and is basically an omnibus bill. It amends nine different laws. Certainly, this government has introduced even bigger omnibus bills in the past. One of our concerns is our inability to study each item separately. The Conservatives have been introducing massive bills from the outset.

As parliamentarians, we cannot oppose certain parts of bill if there is no clause-by-clause study. We are supposed to vote in a block, either in support of or in opposition to the bill. If we vote in favour of the bill, we cannot oppose the negative items. However, if we vote in opposition, the government will say that we do not support farmers. That tells me that we are unable to clearly express our opinion on government bills.

Today I will be looking at all of the proposed changes, and I will be stating which ones we support and which ones concern us. I hope that the Conservatives will be open to certain changes and amendments in committee. That is what legislators do.

The NDP went to talk to farmers and those affected, including small and large businesses, in order to gather their comments. We feel it is important to hear everyone's views. Although I live in a very urban area, I visited community and allotment gardens in my riding. The people there have concerns about what is happening in our agri-food and agricultural sector. It is very worthwhile for an MP to travel in her riding and talk to people about what is happening in the House of Commons.

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The first amendment was about the Plant Breeders' Rights Act. What this is about is moving toward ratification of the 1991 Act of the International Convention for the Protection of New Varieties of Plants. This is good: it expands the rights afforded to plant breeders for the varieties they develop and increases the places along the value chain where plant breeders can collect royalties. A new provision allows farmers to save and condition seed for purposes of plant production and reproduction on their own farm. It protects researchers' right to use patented materials as the basis for developing a new variety or for another research use. It enhances public accessibility to the registry of plant varieties, which is a major change from the previous act. It maintains the ability of CFIA to grant compulsory licences to ensure that in certain situations, plant varieties are available at reasonable prices, widely distributed and of good quality. There are a lot of good things in here.

As written, the bill would ensure that variety developers are able to see a return on investment for their plant breeding research efforts, which is very important. It grants farmers the privilege to save and condition their own seed. This is another big step in the right direction. It promotes access for Canadian farmers to the results of private breeding research from Canada and other countries through an intellectual property rights regime. It protects researchers from infringement of plant breeders' rights.

● (1350)

We also have some concerns, and I hope that we can address them by working effectively in committee with all our colleagues from all parties. The Liberals also said they are supporting this bill. At least we are all on the same page. From that point, it will be important to agree on the few amendments that will have to be made. I believe that it is important for a government to have objective criticism of its legislative measures. Working together as a team provides us with the opportunity to address and correct any flaws in the ideas being proposed.

Our concerns have to do with the provisions on the privileges granted to farmers and the fact that those privileges do not extend to the stocking of propagating material. The consequence of these provisions is that even if farmers are able to save seed for the purpose of reproduction, they may have to pay to store it, which would effectively negate that privilege. The privilege also does not extend to the sale of harvested material. This means that farmers will probably have to pay for the sale of the crops grown from farm-saved seed. It also means that plant breeders could potentially generate revenue on a farmer's entire production, rather than just on the seed purchased to grow the crop. That is another one of our concerns.

We also have concerns about the potential legal burden for producers. The Canadian Federation of Agriculture has called for protections for producers from claims of patent infringement with respect to natural or accidental spreading of a patented plant genetic material. These protections were not included in Bill C-18. Perhaps the Conservatives will be open to adding that protection.

I now want to talk about the amendment to the Agricultural Marketing Programs Act and the advance payments program. Both of these are also affected by this bill. The advance payments program is a financial loan guarantee program that gives producers easier

access to credit through cash advances. Bill C-18 expands access to the advance payments program in a number of ways. There are new allowances for multi-year agreements. This expands producer eligibility beyond those "principally occupied" in the farming operation, which will mean that farmers with significant off-farm employment will also be able to access the program. Furthermore, breeding animals will now be included in the advance payments program.

Our concerns are shared by the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, which has been calling for an increase to the maximum amounts of advances in order to address rising farm expenses. The Conservatives did not include these increases in Bill C-18.

Unfortunately, I do not have time to talk about all of the amendments because, as I was saying, there are so many of them. There are amendments to the Feeds Act, the Fertilizers Act, the Seeds Act, the Health of Animals Act and the Plant Protection Act. We have some concerns in this regard. There is a new licensing and registration system that will require Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada to allocate additional resources to the CFIA.

That is too bad because, once again, the government has not provided for additional funding for the CFIA. With the crises that have occurred in the past, I think that the Conservatives are again imposing additional obligations on an agency without giving it the means to fulfill them. That is something that we have seen the government do repeatedly. It imposes new laws and regulations that are worthwhile and help our country progress but it does not give the agencies or departments responsible the means to carry them out. This is once again a weakness in the bill. I hope that together we will be able to remedy that problem.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, we are going to support this bill because it nonetheless does have some benefits. However, the government must be open to some changes and amendments. The usual democratic process for a bill is to send it to committee. Recently there have been some problems with committees. I hope that with this bill, the government will note that we are open to changes being made.

● (1355)

I hope we will be able to improve the bill so that it is good for our farmers.

I hope to answer some questions, even if we do not have much time.

*Statements by Members**[English]*

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to make reference to the facilitation of certificates for export. This is something which the Conservatives have talked about within the legislation. I want to highlight that there are concerns. There are so many changes in the legislation, but we heard very little, if anything at all, from the minister in regard to this particular issue. It is an important issue.

Imagine all the contracts that have been put under this huge question mark because of the government's inability to get, for example, wheat from our Prairies to the west coast where there were empty ships in the Pacific Ocean, and contracts that were never filled because of government incompetence.

I wonder if the member might want to provide some comment in regard to why we have to tread ever so carefully when it comes to Conservatives and the export of our farm commodities.

[Translation]

Ms. Isabelle Morin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, which touched on a number of aspects.

We do have concerns about the powers being given to the minister. In their bills, the Conservatives are granting more and more powers. Although I have faith in the current minister, we do not know who the next minister will be. That is a concern for me.

Bill C-18 grants the Governor in Council the ability to make changes to the governing of various products. The Governor in Council's new powers include making regulations respecting the manufacturing, sale and shipping of products between provinces. Furthermore, there is no requirement for the government to consult with the provinces on these regulations. As my colleague mentioned, this is one aspect that concerns us.

I hope that in committee we will have the opportunity to hear effective witnesses speak about the consequences and the benefits of this bill, so that we can make amendments that will satisfy everyone.

• (1400)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The time provided for government business has expired. Therefore, the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine will have three minutes to conclude questions and comments.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

*[English]***RICHMOND HILL HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY**

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Richmond Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the 100th anniversary of the Richmond Hill Horticultural Society.

One hundred years ago today, a group of community-minded people got together to help make the village of Richmond Hill more attractive. They were so successful that Richmond Hill came to be known as the Rose Capital of Canada.

Each year the society ensures that baskets and barrels around the town are brimming over with colourful blossoms. Garden tours, workshops, planting projects, flower shows, front garden recognition programs, and an annual award celebration are just some of the activities that it organizes each and every year.

This vibrant volunteer community group has roots that are deeply intertwined with those of the town.

The great town of Richmond Hill is celebrating 140 years this year.

Congratulations to the Richmond Hill Horticultural Society on 100 years of making Richmond Hill so beautiful.

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*[Translation]***CANADIAN BROADCASTING CORPORATION**

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I represent a rural riding. Many people in Laurentides—Labelle do not have access to a wide range of media options.

We rely on our public broadcaster for news, entertainment, and culture. CBC/Radio-Canada is a major part of our cultural fabric. It is an institution that serves us well. In such a large country, access to national media is key. Our public broadcaster plays a vital role in the exchange of knowledge and information.

Cuts to CBC/Radio-Canada are hitting my riding and the rest of the country hard. The Conservatives have demonstrated that they see no future for CBC/Radio-Canada or for public broadcasting in Canada. That is shameful.

I join with my constituents in saying that I too support CBC/Radio-Canada.

* * *

*[English]***AFRICAN INSTITUTE FOR MATHEMATICAL SCIENCES**

Mr. Joe Daniel (Don Valley East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to highlight the works of AIMS, the African Institute for Mathematical Sciences, also known as the Next Einstein Initiative.

AIMS has already set up education centres in South Africa, Senegal, Cameroon, and Ghana, and the next centre will be in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.

I had the privilege of meeting with the AIMS team made up of Professor Neil Turok, founder and chairman of AIMS; Mr. Thierry Zomahoun, Dr. Habiba Chakir; Mr. Sam Awuku; and His Excellency Jakaya Kikwete, the president of Tanzania, to discuss the Tanzanian centre, due to open in September 2014. The Government of Tanzania has committed a historic building for this purpose.

AIMS is a recipient of funds that our government has provided for the purpose of higher education in Africa. These centres are providing masters and doctorate degrees in mathematics and science. I hope that the funding for this outstanding program will be renewed.

*Statements by Members***VETERANS**

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize five veterans in my riding.

Stanley Stepaniak, Joseph Meagher, Joseph Petrie, Marshall Desveaux, and Horace Lovell were recently awarded the highest medal of honour by the French government in commemoration of the 70th anniversary of D-Day and the Battle of Normandy. This honour is bestowed upon all those who helped liberate France in World War II between June 6 and August 31, 1944.

I had the honour of attending the D-Day celebrations in Normandy earlier this month and witnessed first-hand the outpouring of support from French citizens. I also took part in the ceremony on Juno beach where French schoolchildren gave us sand to take back home to this Parliament.

Many of those killed in that invasion were Cape Breton Highlanders.

As Canadians and Cape Bretoners, we are very proud of what these young men did for us and our country.

I ask the House to join me in giving thanks to all those who served. We will be forever grateful to them.

* * *

•(1405)

MEMBER FOR OAK RIDGES—MARKHAM

Mr. Paul Calandra (Oak Ridges—Markham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when this session started, I had the opportunity to inform the House about my two beautiful daughters, Natalie and Olivia. As yesterday was Father's Day, I thought this would be a good opportunity to give the House an update. As a proud father, I received a bracelet from my daughter Natalie yesterday. My daughter Olivia gave me a pot of grass, but I can assure the House and the Minister of Justice that it is Kentucky blue grass and it has no medicinal impact.

I would say to all of my friends, if they find themselves in Oak Ridges—Markham this summer, please drop by my daughters' lemonade stand.

I would also like to tell all of my wonderful friends in the Press Gallery who were so helpful and so reassuring to me in the fall that if they are thirsty for lemonade and they find themselves in Oak Ridges—Markham this summer, keep driving.

* * *

[*Translation*]

LAVAL RELAY FOR LIFE

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, I participated in the Laval Relay for Life at Leblanc school.

The event, which brings together thousands of people—volunteers, people fighting cancer and survivors—for one night each year, is very meaningful to me. This year, the relay raised over \$184,000 for the Canadian Cancer Society.

Congratulations to the organizers, participants, and volunteers for working to make this year's fundraiser a memorable success. Let us remain hopeful and keep fighting.

On another note, during its annual general meeting, the Association lavalloise pour le transport adapté stated that the Canada Post cuts will have serious consequences, particularly for people with reduced mobility.

The association's executive director, Louise Audet, and its president, Monique Brazeau, along with its members, stand with the NDP in opposing the Conservative cuts and supporting continued home mail delivery, and I thank them.

* * *

[*English*]

NATIONAL HEALTH AND FITNESS DAY

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank citizens in my riding and across the country and fellow members for working together to increase health and fitness and reduce health care costs.

In 2011, I was honoured to receive unanimous support to pass my first private member's bill, combatting crystal meth and Ecstasy.

I thank the Ministers of Public Safety and Health for supporting my second private member's initiative to create a national prescription drug drop-off day.

Just last Thursday, Bill S-211, creating a national health and fitness day, introduced by Senator Nancy Greene Raine, won unanimous support in the Senate. Having worked on this third initiative for years, I am proud today to be giving the first reading of Bill S-211 as its sponsor in this House. As we head toward Canada's 150th anniversary, it is amazing that over 150 cities have already proclaimed national health and fitness day even before the bill becomes law. We are on the brink of major change that will reverse trends of inactivity, obesity, diabetes, and cardiovascular disease. By Canada's 150th, we will be on the trail to make Canada the fittest nation on earth.

* * *

TOURISM WEEK

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this being tourism week, we celebrate the continued success of this key industry, which brings jobs and economic growth to every single region of this country.

The year 2013 was outstanding for all of the industry's key partners, from the Tourism Industry Association of Canada and the Canadian Tourism Commission, to private sector hospitality and tourism operators. All major tourism indicators for Canada are positive, with solid growth in tourism revenue, GDP, arrivals, and employment. Canada's tourism sector generates almost \$85 billion in revenues annually and supports over 600,000 jobs.

Statements by Members

The good news does not end there. Rendez-vous Canada, the CTC's premier international tourism marketplace, saw record-breaking attendance. These international buyers are our partners in the trillion-dollar global tourism industry, where every 1% increase in Canadian arrivals is equivalent to \$817 million in growth in Canadian exports.

On behalf of our government and all members of this House, my congratulations to the Canadian tourism sector on yet another successful year.

* * *

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, increasingly, my generation is being referred to as a "lost generation". There are 27% of young Canadians who are now unemployed or underemployed, and up to 300,000 are working as unpaid interns. Of all the OECD nations, Canada now has the most university grads earning less than the national median income.

Too many young workers live in a climate of uncertainty and fear.

• (1410)

[*Translation*]

Many young Canadians have to take unstable jobs or unpaid internships. They currently have no protection under federal law.

Today, I am pleased to introduce a private member's bill in order to give unpaid interns the same protections as paid employees. The bill would also prevent paid jobs from being converted to unpaid internships.

I urge my colleagues to support this important initiative to help young workers.

* * *

[*English*]

WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, June 15, was World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, an important day to recognize that this very unfortunate situation exists and must be stopped. Our government, under the leadership of the Minister of State for Seniors, has made elder abuse awareness and prevention a top priority. We have enacted landmark legislation to recognize elder abuse in the Criminal Code of Canada.

Local organizations like the Peel Elder Abuse Prevention Network in my community, supported by a new horizons for seniors grant, are making a difference and hosting a seniors healthy living expo tomorrow in Mississauga.

We must all work together to prevent the financial, physical, and psychological abuse of the women and men who have built this country and deserve to live their lives in dignity and respect. I encourage all Canadians to go to seniors.gc.ca to learn more.

* * *

RODERICK MACDONALD

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, McGill law professor Roderick Macdonald passed away on June 13

after battling cancer. We have lost one of our greatest scholars and most passionate humanitarians.

[*Translation*]

Roderick Macdonald was the first president of the Law Commission of Canada, an Officer of the Order of Canada, and the president of the Royal Society of Canada. He distinguished himself as a generous teacher revered by his students, a visionary dean of McGill's Faculty of Law, a staunch defender of justice, a world-renowned academic, and an author of public reports that have transformed a number of areas of law.

[*English*]

As his McGill colleague Richard Janda put it, Rod's most wonderful gift to others was the "myriad ways he enabled others to become their better selves".

Rod filled the room while allowing others to fill it too. He was a force of nature who was on earth to nurture others. UBC law professor Joel Bakan captures Rod perfectly when he writes that Rod was "A remarkable human being—heart, soul, and intellect beautifully in synch." He will be sorely missed.

* * *

YAD VASHEM

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, 2013 marked the 60th anniversary of Yad Vashem, Israel's official living memorial to Jewish victims of the Holocaust, and the world centre for documentation, research, education, and commemoration of the Holocaust. To recognize this notable occasion, Yad Vashem is leading an international mission through Poland and Israel to educate participants on the horrors Jews faced at the hands of German Nazis during the Holocaust. We are proud to have our Minister for Multiculturalism participating in part of this mission on behalf of all Canadians.

Today and every day we must never forget. We must realize how pernicious anti-Semitism is, and continue to be vigilant against anti-Semitism in all its insidious forms.

* * *

WORLD ELDER ABUSE AWARENESS DAY

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday was World Elder Abuse Awareness Day, a day on which we bring attention to this very serious problem that often goes ignored.

Oral Questions

Elder abuse can take many forms, from physical and emotional harm to financial abuse. It can be perpetrated by those closest to us, family members or trusted caregivers. Sadly, victims are often ashamed and afraid to report the abuse to the proper authorities, allowing the cycle of abuse to continue unabated. The goal of World Elder Abuse Awareness Day is to bring an end to this cycle of silence and shine a light on an issue that lingers in darkness.

We all have a role in recognizing and preventing elder abuse and empowering victims to speak out and seek assistance. We must work together to recognize and celebrate the valuable role our seniors play in our communities and to ensure that they enjoy their lives free from abuse and exploitation.

* * *

●(1415)

IMMIGRATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend the radical leftist group No One is Illegal held a small protest to call for the end of detention for illegal immigrants. Even though Canada generously accepts 250,000 legal immigrants every year, these radicals would prefer to let those who abuse the generosity of Canadians roam our streets.

This is the same group that has said on repeated occasions that they do not believe that the Canadian state is a legitimate entity. It is shocking to see the President of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers say that “The labour movement is united behind...an end to...[immigration] detentions”.

The left-wing ideology of big union bosses knows no end when they tie themselves to the illegal immigrants who often take jobs away from hard-working, law-abiding members.

Our Conservative government makes no apologies for the fact that we have removed more than 115,000 illegal immigrants since 2006.

* * *

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have devoted tens of millions of taxpayer dollars in an attempt to rebrand Canadian history in their own image. The Conservatives have failed. A government public opinion survey shows that Canadians regard some of the Prime Minister's least favourite people as the greatest Canadian heroes, people like Tommy Douglas, the father of medicare and of the NDP, and Jack Layton, a tireless worker on behalf of ordinary Canadians and the most proud New Democrat.

The minister responded by saying Canadians don't regard Tommy Douglas as a New Democrat.

What are Canada's greatest accomplishments as selected by Canadians? Medicare, peacekeeping, and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, things consistently undermined and under attack by the Prime Minister.

Instead of spending millions trying to convince Canadians to adopt Conservative values, the government should heed the message of Canadians like Tommy Douglas and Jack Layton, proud New Democrats who truly embody great Canadian values.

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Jeff Watson (Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP insists that it will not pay back money that it misspent to send out inappropriate and partisan mail-outs. This is unacceptable to us and the taxpayers. The rules have always been clear. It is not acceptable to use House of Commons resources to fund party offices or send party mail-outs.

Last week, the all-party Board of Internal Economy received and accepted the non-partisan House official's recommendations, showing that the total cost of the NDP's partisan mail-outs was \$1.17 million. Of that, \$36,000 is owed to the House and \$1.13 million is associated with the use of franking privileges through Canada Post.

The verdict is clear. The NDP broke the rules, and Canadians now expect that it will pay it back. Should the NDP continue its campaign to evade accountability, we fully support House administration and Canada Post taking every step necessary to recoup every penny for Canadian taxpayers.

We say, “Pay it back.”

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, six months ago, New Democrats put forward a motion calling upon the government to immediately address “the mental health crisis facing Canadian soldiers and veterans”. Conservatives defeated that motion. Now we learn that the Conservative government actually ignored advice from the military's director of special inquiries on how to improve investigations of suicides in order to learn how to avoid even more.

How can the Prime Minister possibly justify such alarming and unconscionable neglect of the mental health of our soldiers and veterans?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are doing no such thing. Again, our thoughts and prayers are with the families who are dealing with this loss.

Last year, I asked the military to account for delays in some cases, because these delays were preventing families from getting the closure they need and deserve. Since then, the Chief of the Defence Staff has taken action to clear up the backlog of cases. As a matter of fact, more than 80% of them have been cleared up. There are fewer than 10 outstanding.

[Translation]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, here are the real numbers. For the past two years, the Department of National Defence has been grappling with a serious delay in investigations into the suicides of 75 of our soldiers. These investigations could uncover vital information about the causes and warning signs of suicide. This would prevent future suicides.

The Conservatives are showing reckless negligence. Why did they not follow the director's recommendations? How can they justify disregarding the tools that would prevent more suicides? How can they do that?

• (1420)

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Leader of the Opposition is completely wrong. The Chief of the Defence Staff has taken action to clear up the backlog in cases. As a matter of fact, more than 80% of them have been cleared up, from 54 to fewer than 10. I am encouraged by this progress, and so should he be.

* * *

JUSTICE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has just named a Federal Court judge to the Quebec Court of Appeal in what seems to be an obvious attempt to get around the rules for appointing Quebec judges to the Supreme Court. That newest appointment is now being challenged by Rocco Galati, the same lawyer who had the Nadon appointment thrown out.

Why is the Prime Minister once again trying to get around the rules? Why is he defying both the letter and the spirit of the Nadon decision?

[Translation]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is always guided by the principles of merit and legal excellence in the selection and appointment of judges to the Canadian courts. Justice Mainville is an expert in public sector law negotiations, and in administrative, constitutional, energy, and environmental law. He also lectured at McGill. He is the author of a university textbook on aboriginal law. This shows that he has considerable expertise.

[English]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think he is reading from his notes from Nadon.

[Translation]

Let us be clear. The Conservatives are trying to use the Quebec Court of Appeal as a springboard for circumventing the rules for Supreme Court appointments. After dishonouring the Supreme Court, they are now preparing to stand in the way of the good work

Oral Questions

that is done by the highest court in Quebec. This is becoming a worrisome habit of the Conservatives. Why did they openly defy the Supreme Court's decision in the unfortunate Nadon affair?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it appears the Leader of the Opposition is reading from one of his illegal handouts that came from one of his illegal offices.

As I said in French, our government is guided by merit and legal excellence. Mr. Mainville is an expert in public sector law negotiations, administrative law, and constitutional law. He lectured at McGill. He has been a member of the Quebec bar for 33 years and sat as a Federal Court judge for five years.

I believe his wealth of legal knowledge will be welcome at the Supreme Court and will be of significant benefit to the Quebec Court of Appeal.

[Translation]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is not the first time that the Conservatives have tried to use trickery when appointing judges. After having been reprimanded and contradicted by the Supreme Court, they did the only thing they know how to do, and that is to publicly attack the Chief Justice. Now, they are violating the Supreme Court's ruling by failing to abide by the Constitution of Canada when appointing Quebec judges to the Supreme Court. Why is the Prime Minister once again attacking the highest court in our country? Why do the Conservatives want to undermine the integrity of the Supreme Court?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, we are not attacking anyone. We made a decision based on merit and legal excellence.

[English]

These appointments are vetted. These appointments come on application from individuals. The intention is always to have the best minds, those with the best ability, sitting in Quebec, as in all the superior courts of our country, and that includes the Supreme Court of Canada.

It is unfortunate that the Leader of the Opposition chooses to constantly try to politicize these issues.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government is soon going to announce its decision on the northern gateway pipeline.

Meanwhile, even the Prime Minister's special envoy has said that the Conservatives have ignored aboriginal communities and that this project could violate their constitutional rights.

This government is incapable of protecting our environment and defending aboriginal communities.

Will it make the right decision and reject this project?

Oral Questions

●(1425)

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the review panel has submitted its report and the projects will only be approved if they are safe for Canadians and for the environment.

We are carefully studying the report and a decision will be made soon.

[English]

Hon. Geoff Regan (Halifax West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the joint review panel on the northern gateway warned that this project would cause adverse effects on a number of valued ecosystems. Obviously the environment is not a priority for this government. Because of gross Conservative mismanagement, this proposal faces a battery of legal challenges and even threats of civil disobedience.

Why are they pandering to the Prime Minister's pals instead of protecting the environment and defending the rights of aboriginal and B.C. communities? Just say no.

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think what the Liberal Party is saying is no to responsible resource development, and that is unfortunate for Albertans and British Columbians.

We are thoroughly reviewing the joint panel recommendations prior to making any decision on this project. We are proud of the action we have taken to ensure that Canada has a world-class regulatory framework and the means for the safest form of transportation for our energy products.

We have been clear. Projects will only proceed if they are safe for Canadians and safe for the environment.

* * *

PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, great news today from the Department of National Defence, which announced that an RFP to replace the aging CF-18s will be coming out between 2017 and 2019 with a decision to come between 2018 and 2020.

Can the government confirm that the Prime Minister's Office will not overrule DND's timelines, that an RFP will go out in 2017 to 2019, and that that request for proposals will be open to all airplane manufacturers?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I should reaffirm that no decision has been made yet on how to replace the CF-18s.

To make the decision, we did embark on an ambitious seven-point plan. We had an independent panel of outside experts review the assessment that was done by the RCAF. Over the next several weeks we will be carefully reviewing a number of reports on this subject so that we can make sure that we get the equipment our men and women in uniform need to do the job.

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the Nadon affair, the Supreme Court told the Conservatives that they could not appoint a Federal Court judge to represent Quebec on the highest court.

Instead of acknowledging that ruling, they are trying to get around it by appointing Justice Mainville to the Quebec Court of Appeal, likely so that they can later appoint him to the Supreme Court. They are not fooling anyone with this trick. What is more, Justice Mainville's appointment is now being challenged in court.

Why is the Prime Minister using Quebec's courts to thumb his nose yet again at the Supreme Court and our Constitution?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, the member is wrong.

[English]

It is in fact the reality that this individual is not only highly qualified but applied for this position.

It would be interesting for Quebecers to know that this member and her party seem to be continually taking the side of a Toronto defence lawyer who is standing up for Quebec.

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, maybe he should read all the comments that came out in French over the weekend.

[Translation]

Judicial appointments should not be a process of trial and error to satisfy the Prime Minister's ego. Like Justice Nadon, Justice Mainville sat on the Federal Court. The Supreme Court clearly stated that this makes them ineligible to represent Quebec on the Supreme Court. It is a matter of complying with the Constitution and the civil law tradition.

Could the Minister of Justice confirm whether his government plans on appointing Justice Mainville to the Supreme Court? He almost implied it earlier.

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, insinuation and speculation is the mainstay of the NDP. Clearly this is an individual of outstanding legal merit, similar to Mr. Justice Nadon, who I remind the hon. member she referred to as an excellent jurist and a brilliant man.

This individual is the same. In fact, clearly, he is someone who was a member of the Quebec bar association for 33 years, in addition to sitting five years as a judge. She should get behind this individual and support him and his good work as a new appeal court judge in the province of Quebec.

*Oral Questions***THE ENVIRONMENT**

● (1430)

*[Translation]***NATURAL RESOURCES**

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the National Energy Board, the organization that is responsible for overseeing the safety of oil pipelines, estimates that it will have to spend \$21 million to move from Calgary to Calgary. They must be doing business with the Andrew Leslie moving company. Twenty-one million dollars is unbelievable. That is more than the additional \$13.5 million the board received to increase pipeline inspections and improve safety across Canada. Why are the Conservatives spending more money on this move than on pipeline safety?

[English]

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are proud of the work the National Energy Board does. Their decisions are driven by science and facts, contrary to the ideological position the NDP takes over responsible resource development. We have every bit of confidence they will continue to do their good work.

[Translation]

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, not only have the Conservatives spent twice as much money on the National Energy Board move as they have on pipeline safety, but they are also hiding the details of this expense. The only information on the board's website is that it has moved three blocks over. How did they manage to spend \$21 million on that? Why hide the details of that expense?

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we know that the NDP is opposed to scientific regulatory review of projects for ideological reasons. We on this side of the House are proud of the National Energy Board, which is mandated to listen to those who are directly affected and can choose to hear from those who have relevant information or knowledge in that domain. We will allow the independent scientific review committee to draft its recommendations on projects.

[English]

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, speaking about ideology, they take \$21 million to move a few blocks, and that is almost double the amount of funding they announced for pipeline safety. It is no wonder people are getting fed up with the Conservative government.

Now, with no consultation, they choose someone straight from the Alberta Conservatives as the new head of the National Energy Board. From Keystone to northern gateway, Conservatives have gutted reviews and have taken a radical and unbalanced approach to pipelines. Will the Conservatives at least agree to call the new NEB chair to committee?

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the candidate for the chair has impeccable credentials. Shame on her for not acknowledging that.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, then he should bring those credentials to committee.

[Translation]

While we are waiting for the decision on the northern gateway pipeline, the Prime Minister's special envoy for aboriginal affairs criticized the Conservatives' public relations job. However, the problem is more serious than public relations. The problem is the construction of an oil terminal in a fragile ecosystem like the north coast of British Columbia. Even Enbridge has indicated that the project cannot be 100% safe. An oil spill is therefore inevitable. Will the Conservatives say no to northern gateway?

[English]

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first nations form a significant part of the natural resource sector in terms of their contribution for jobs and the employment opportunities it offers them. Success of this sector, in fact, depends on their full participation, from environmental stewardship to the economic benefits of responsible resource development.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, British Columbians want this pipeline proposal rejected. The multi-million dollar promotion campaign has completely failed. People know the pipeline proposal is short-sighted and will pose significant risks. Waiting will not make it any better, waiting will not make it any more popular, waiting will not make it any safer, and waiting will not make anyone better prepared to deal with the inevitable oil spill.

Why will the government not end the uncertainty and just say "no" to northern gateway?

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Joint Review Panel has submitted its recommendation to the government. We are carefully reviewing this recommendation and the decision will be forthcoming.

There is another report out there, and this comes from the Board of Internal Economy. It has one recommendation: that the NDP pay back the \$1.17 million it bilked the taxpayers out of. When is it going to pay careful attention to this decision and pay it back?

* * *

● (1435)

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, someone has an unpopular decision to make, I guess.

Oral Questions

It is 24 hours until the Conservative government makes its decision—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley now the floor. Members need to come to order.

The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, it is just 24 hours until Conservatives have the chance to make a decision on Enbridge northern gateway, 24 hours for 21 B.C. Conservatives to decide who they really work for.

On this side, we believe in working for British Columbians; on that side, it is the oil lobby. On this side, we respect first nations; on that side, they try to bully first nations. On this side, we believe in value-added jobs; on that side, they cannot ship them out fast enough.

With just 24 hours left to go, let us see who B.C. Conservatives really work for.

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been clear that projects will only proceed if they are safe for Canadians and safe for the environment. We are proud of the action we have taken to ensure Canada has a world-class regulatory framework and a means for the safest form of transportation for our energy products.

Our government is currently reviewing the independent Joint Review Panel prior to making any decisions on this project.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, they claim they believe in science, but it was the Conservatives who gutted the Fisheries Act. It was the Conservatives who wiped the Environmental Assessment Act. It is Conservatives who muzzled their own scientists from telling Canadians the truth.

Enbridge northern gateway represents that rare Holy Trinity of bad ideas. Environmentally, it is a disaster waiting to happen. Economically, it is a sellout of good Canadian jobs. Politically, it is a nightmare for a tired, out-of-date, arrogant government that just cannot listen to the people who put it here.

Finally, will B.C. Conservatives stand up for British Columbians and reject this bad proposal?

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, a process is currently under way. The joint panel has provided the government its recommendation and we are carefully considering it prior to making any decision on this project. Once again, projects will only be approved if they are safe for Canadians and safe for the environment.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the minister is getting a bit uncomfortable with his weak excuses.

Doug Eyford, the government's own special envoy, reported that the northern gateway pipeline approval process lacked proper governmental oversight, lacked consultation with first nations. In

fact, Eyford asserts that the Prime Minister mismanaged the whole process, being wilfully blind to the project's risks.

One major oil tanker spill and the Pacific north coast would never be the same again, and the people of B.C. understand this. They understand that the risks are real and that they are not worth the benefits.

Why will the minister and Prime Minister not listen to British Columbians?

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have received the report by Mr. Eyford. We appreciate its recommendations and we have already acted on two of them. They have been very well received by first nations leadership.

Obviously, there are elements here of world-class and world-leading liability regimes, safety preparedness and spill response, and a very remote chance that would even occur. With more than 73,000 kilometres of pipeline in Canada and a 99.999% safety record, we are confident that record and Mr. Eyford's suggestions will help build the kind of framework for us to move forward with respect to transportation of our energy products.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the temporary foreign worker program seems to be run by three unwise ministers. They will not hear complaints about Canadians losing their jobs. They will not speak to the provinces about enforcement. Now we know they have not seen any useful labour market data.

The government decided to slash spending on labour market spending to the point where labour market opinions have become labour market guesses. How can the Conservatives defend this decision?

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, to begin with, we will not take any lessons from the Liberals when it comes the temporary foreign worker program, which it used to bring in strippers. We will not take any lessons from the Liberals when it comes to the labour market or skills training, because they did nothing on that.

What we will do is follow the leadership of the Prime Minister and the Minister of Employment and Social Development, who are making necessary reforms to the temporary foreign worker program, who have introduced the Canada job grant, getting Canadians back to work with the jobs that are available.

Oral Questions

●(1440)

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I join thousands of medical professionals and other concerned Canadians who have come together in 16 cities in a national day of action to demand that government reverse its short-sighted and mean-spirited cuts to refugee health care.

The minister is misleading Canadians. He is not only rejecting failed claimants, he is shamefully refusing health care to refugees as they arrive in Canada.

The minister has said that refugees are a federal responsibility. The doctors are asking when he will accept his responsibility, exhibit Canadian values and reverse these cuts.

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member is wrong. The member and these few activists are actually misleading Canadians. They are not helping refugees. They are trying to help failed and bogus claimants and they are trying to undo taxpayer benefits from a very successful reform, one that has reduced, by 87%, the number of claimants from safe countries and that has saved Canadian taxpayers \$600 million in one year.

All of that threatens to be undone if either the Liberals or the NDP have their way on refugee policy.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, leaving refugees without health care is an appalling fact that the government has perpetrated on our country. We are talking about pregnant women and children, and because they have no access to preventative medicine, when they get severely ill, they go to the hospital. The hospitals in the provinces have to pick up a much more costly tab for this.

Will the minister then finally do the right thing and reinstate the health care coverage for refugee claimants in Canada?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member has again misspoken.

He is not calling for help for refugees. Refugees are protected and helped by the interim federal health program, by Canada's generous programs that resettle one out of ten refugees who come from all over the world every year.

What the member is asking for is to make decisions himself on who deserves taxpayer money through the health care system. He is asking doctors to decide who a refugee is, to take that power away from the Immigration and Refugee Board.

It undermines the rule of law and it is unfair to taxpayers. We will not let it happen.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since the minister brings up the government's record on refugees, let us talk about that then.

Three million people have been displaced in Syria, half of them women and children, and yet the minister stubbornly refuses to tell us how many have actually come to Canada. He cannot now use the excuse that he has to run to QP to excuse the question.

This is a simple question. Will the minister tell us, exactly, of the 200 Syrian refugees that the government has committed to sponsoring in Canada, how many of them are in Canada? Is 10, is it 20 or is it 100? How many?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member would do well to get his facts straight.

We have committed to helping 1,300; 1,150 have received Canada's protection and are inside Canada. Moreover, on a day when terrorists are unfortunately threatening the stability of Iraq, it is important to remind the House that Canada's commitment from 2009 to resettle 20,000 Iraqis, many of whom took refuge in Syria in recent years, has almost been met.

That is action. That is action for refugees. That is this government's record, and we are proud of it.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, once again the minister is choosing to create confusion rather than to provide a clear answer to a simple question.

Perhaps he is not aware of his own figures or perhaps he is not very proud of them and so he would prefer not to share them. Either way, it is not very reassuring.

The civil war in Syria continues to wreak havoc. Canadians want Canada to meet its international commitments.

We do not want to know how many refugees have received Canada's protection. What we want to know is exactly how many of the 200 refugees that the government promised to sponsor last year are actually in Canada. How many of those 200 refugees are in Canada?

●(1445)

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we promised to help those refugees before the end of this year and we are already in the process of exceeding that number.

A total of 1,150 Syrians have already received Canada's protection and are currently in Canada. It is the NDP that is causing confusion by insisting that the refugees are failed refugee claimants. That is not fair to Canadian taxpayers.

Why does the NDP not want temporary foreign workers, tourists, and students to receive health care in Canada when failed refugee claimants have access to it? That is unfair.

We do not agree with that policy or with the confusion the NDP is creating.

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we still do not have any figures on the number of government-sponsored refugees.

In addition to the confusion over the issue of Syrian refugees and a reform that denies pregnant women and children the health care that they desperately need, the minister wants to pass his citizenship bill, which attacks the fundamental rights of Canadians. A growing number of experts say that the bill could end up in court because it does not comply with the Constitution.

Oral Questions

Why does the minister want to rush through a bill that will inevitably end up in court instead of truly addressing the problems with our immigration and citizenship system?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are very proud of our bill on Canadian citizenship, which will pass at third reading after question period today.

We are proud to strengthen the value of Canadian citizenship and to talk about terrorism, treason and espionage, which should not be accepted as foundations of our citizenship. Indeed, we will revoke Canadian citizenship from dual citizens who commit serious crimes.

We would like the NDP to think about that on a day when terrorists are causing panic in Iraq.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the ongoing situation in Iraq is deeply troubling. Recent reports indicate that the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant has taken the city of Tal Afar. This news follows the capture of Tikrit and Mosul last week by this brutal terrorist organization. This organization's activities are not simply limited to Iraq but extend into Syria as well, where it is responsible for untold numbers of deaths as well as destruction.

Could the Minister of Foreign Affairs please comment on this developing situation Iraq?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada and our government are very concerned by the rise in terrorism in Iraq, and we extend our sincere condolences to the families and friends of those who have been killed.

Since 2012, the ISIL has been a listed terrorist entity in Canada. We are committed to working with the Iraqi leadership. I should point out that Canada has not been asked to participate in any military effort, nor is it something we are considering.

* * *

[Translation]

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Social Security Tribunal, which hears Canadians' appeals concerning employment insurance and old age security, is overwhelmed because of a lack of umpires.

For example, the income security section has only 35 umpires to hear 3,700 cases. At this rate it will take nine and a half years to hear these cases, provided that there are no new cases, which is light years from reality.

Does the minister believe that it is normal for it to take this long for Canadians to obtain justice?

[English]

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Social Security Tribunal started its operations on April 1, 2013, just over a year ago. It received higher than anticipated caseloads from the legacy tribunal.

That said, this tribunal is ready now to look at all these cases, and we expect it to get caught up. It is an arm's-length tribunal, but we do expect it to catch up with these cases.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are trying to justify their mismanagement by telling us that the problem is the backlog created by the former tribunals. They should stop insulting people. The Conservatives have been in power for eight years.

If the system still poses problems, it is because of the Conservatives' incompetence. The Conservatives mismanaged the transition to the Social Security Tribunal, and they are not hiring enough umpires. Thousands of unemployed workers, disabled people, and seniors must wait months without income before their cases are heard.

Why is the government once again trying to save money at the expense of the poorest Canadians?

• (1450)

[English]

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, currently there are two vacancies, and we expect those to be filled very soon. The Social Security Tribunal is an independent administrative tribunal that operates at arm's length from the department. It is committed to providing fair, credible, and impartial appeal processes in a timely manner, and that is what we expect it to do.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a new system and no transition plan leaves thousands of Canadians waiting years for a hearing. That is nothing to be proud of.

Last year, the income security section of the Social Security Tribunal held only 178 hearings. It will take nine and a half years just to hear all of the current cases. These are senior citizens, people with disabilities, our most vulnerable, heartlessly being left behind by the government.

Where is the minister's plan for fixing the mess that Conservatives have made of the Social Security Tribunal?

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is obvious that the NDP has never been in government and does not understand how some of these processes work.

Here are the facts. On April 1, 2013, the Social Security Tribunal was established. A year later, the members were ready. They are moving forward. We expect them to catch up with the backlog. We care about the people who are waiting for their hearings to be heard. We are not going to take lessons from the NDP, who do not understand that these processes are how they move forward.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that minister should hang her head in shame. A woman in London suffering from a terminal medical condition requested an urgent hearing, in December 2012. A year and a half went by with no reply. She finally did hear back, but the tribunal will not see her before next fall.

Thousands of Canadians are being put in similar precarious situations. Why are the Conservatives refusing to fix the mess that they created with the Social Security Tribunal?

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the colleagues who should be hanging their heads in shame are every single one of the NDP who owe \$1.17 million for the—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Hon. Candice Bergen: The Social Security Tribunal is giving top priority to these legacy cases. It has committed to providing fair, credible, and impartial appeal processes in a timely manner.

If New Democrats want to hang their heads in shame, I think now is the time.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for Conservatives, \$32 million to National Defence commemorating military history is a priority, while hiring additional mental health workers and acting on a backlog of investigations into suicides is not. For Conservatives, \$50 million from Veterans Affairs on commemorations is a priority, but \$5 million on regional offices and programs for veterans is not.

Has the minister not heard them? Veterans are pleading for more services, not more ceremonies. Why will the Conservative government not listen to them?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all of the needs of the members of our armed forces and our veterans are our concern and priority. This is in complete contrast to the Liberals. Their idea of a major military expenditure was the \$500 million that they paid in penalties when they cancelled the helicopter contract. We will continue to make this a priority. That is the difference between us and them.

* * *

JUSTICE

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier in question period, the Minister of Justice was asked a question with respect to the appointment of Justice Mainville. He said that he believes his wealth of legal knowledge will be welcome at the Supreme Court and will be of significant benefit to the Quebec Court of Appeal.

Will the Minister of Justice confirm that the government intends to appoint Justice Mainville to fill the upcoming Quebec vacancy on the Supreme Court, and thereby do indirectly what it cannot do directly?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I did not follow those mental

Oral Questions

gymnastics because the Superior Court of Quebec is a Supreme Court in the province. I would ask the member to go back and maybe read *Hansard*.

The reality is that we have a very capable individual here, who applied for and has now been appointed to the appeal court of the Superior Court of Quebec. I know he will provide tremendous service to our country, as he has through the Federal Court. I do not know why the opposition members spend so much time attacking the judiciary these days.

* * *

● (1455)

[Translation]

TOURISM

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the price of gas has reached a record high as we head into Tourism Week in Canada. This is another factor that has a negative impact on tourism. The Tourism Industry Association of Canada is calling for stable funding over three years to monitor the U.S. tourism market. More than 600,000 Canadian jobs depend on this market. Will the minister stop making budget cuts to the Canadian Tourism Commission and take meaningful action to attract visitors to Canada?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism, and Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question. The tourism industry appears to be important to the NDP, but what really disappoints me is that the New Democrats want to impose a \$21 billion tax that will hurt the tourism industry. Their words are not consistent with their actions.

We will not impose additional taxes on the tourism industry. We will welcome tourists across Canada. This is an \$84 billion industry that creates more than 608,000 jobs in Canada. This industry is important to us, unlike the NDP.

[English]

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Tourism Week is off to a difficult start, with record high gas prices adding to the many challenges that the industry is already facing, like falling numbers of American visitors. Maybe the minister should learn that. There are radical Conservative cuts to the Canadian Tourism Commission as well.

The Tourism Industry Association of Canada is demanding that the government stop cutting and start investing in a strategy to attract tourists back to Canada. Tourism generates \$84 billion in communities across the country, but due to neglect, this industry is suffering under the Conservatives.

Will the minister act now to help revitalize tourism in this country?

Oral Questions

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism, and Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as everybody knows, the Canadian tourism industry is on the right track. This year is one of the best. That is a fact. Visitors coming from outside the country are spending more money this year than they did last year.

We have created more jobs in this industry. When I say “we”, I mean that the industry and the small entrepreneurs—the real entrepreneurs—are creating jobs.

We continue to have more travellers coming from China, India, Brazil, and America to visit our country. It is a great year for the tourism industry.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, June 16 to 20 is Tourism Week in Canada. This week we will take a moment to honour the hard work of entrepreneurs who help make the tourism industry successful by creating jobs and spurring economic growth. Can the Minister of State for Small Business and Tourism, and Agriculture tell us about Canada's commitment to the tourism sector?

Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism, and Agriculture), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to say that we have a federal tourism strategy. The opposition did not support this strategy, even though it was well received by the tourism industry. It is a major industry, worth \$84 billion. We are not like the NDP, which wants to impose a \$21 billion carbon tax that will harm the tourism industry. We will not do that. We will continue to support this industry.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I was a member of the first parliamentary delegation to visit Madagascar after the 2013 presidential elections. In 2009, most countries suspended their relations to and programs in this country. However, they have now re-established them. That is also the case for the International Monetary Fund.

Can the Minister of Foreign Affairs confirm that Canada also intends to fully restore its ties to Madagascar in order to help the Malagasy people?

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for the question and for his interest in African issues.

Obviously, we think the time has come to review the status of our relationship with Madagascar, with a view to normalizing relations. We do think it is important to have some consultations before we do so, and I would be very pleased to take the member's suggestion under advisement.

* * *

• (1500)

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the community of Marten Falls has been on a boiled water advisory

for 10 years. This past winter, a filter broke at the plant so that the water in the taps is not even safe to bathe babies. The reserve does not have the \$70,000 to replace the filter, nor the expertise.

Bathing children in contaminated water would not be tolerated in any non-native community. Will the minister work with the community, recognize that this is an emergency, and ensure that the people of Marten Falls have what every other Canadian citizen takes for granted, which is safe water for their children?

Hon. Bernard Valcourt (Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to reassure the hon. member that indeed we are working with the first nation to address the problem of safe drinking water on this reserve.

I want to point out to the House that we take action for first nations across Canada so that they have the same quality of drinking water as all Canadians. It is surprising that the hon. member questions this. In the last budget, we planned on investing over \$300 million for safe water on reserves, and he voted against it.

* * *

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Phil McColeman (Brant, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has done more to support persons with disabilities than any previous government.

I was pleased when the House unanimously supported my motion, Motion No. 430, which called for continued and increased support for employment opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Would the Minister of State for Social Development please update this House on how our government is supporting the lives of persons with disabilities?

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the great work he has done on behalf of persons with disabilities.

The legacy of the late Jim Flaherty lives on through the programs we have created to help persons with disabilities, whether it is the registered disabilities savings plan, the first of its kind, and the only one in the world, and which helps parents save for their children who have disabilities; our enabling accessibility fund, which has helped over 1,400 projects across Canada; or our opportunities fund, which helps Canadians with disabilities to get back to work.

We are proud of what we have done.

* * *

[*Translation*]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, construction of Quebec City's ice oval has been delayed.

Oral Questions

The federal government promised to pay one-third of the cost of this infrastructure, but the promised money from the Building Canada fund may no longer be available. Last Friday, in response to our question, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services responded by talking about shipbuilding.

Can the Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs take this more seriously and clearly indicate whether the federal government will keep its promise even if there are delays?

[English]

Mr. Peter Braid (Parliamentary Secretary for Infrastructure and Communities, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for that question, the second time.

I am very pleased to take this opportunity to confirm that the federal government's commitment to the ice oval rink in Quebec City remains firm and is absolutely crystal clear. We await the municipality of Quebec City and the Province of Quebec with respect to the construction of this project. That is clear.

What is less clear is whether the NDP will pay back taxpayers the money it owes for inappropriate mailings and office expenses.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the British Columbia government testified that Enbridge had not fulfilled its responsibilities in evidence to make it acceptable to British Columbians to build the risky pipeline and tanker scheme. The Union of British Columbia Municipalities opposes the project. Every first nation along the pipeline and tanker routes opposes the project. The majority of British Columbians oppose the project, including the residents of Kitimat, who rejected it in a plebiscite.

The Prime Minister once urged the province of Alberta to resist heavy-handed tactics from a hostile federal government. Will he ensure that the project does not go ahead unless British Columbians accept it?

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the joint review panel has submitted its recommendation to the government. Projects will only be approved if they are safe for Canadians and safe for the environment. We are carefully reviewing this recommendation and a response will be forthcoming.

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, people are saying that Bill C-36, as it stands, will not make prostitution illegal. This is an important aspect because the legal nature of prostitution was a fundamental element that, for the Supreme Court justices, justified their ruling in the Bedford case.

Will the Minister of Justice clearly state in Bill C-36 that prostitution is illegal in Canada?

• (1505)

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for her long-standing interest in this subject, to protect vulnerable Canadians and to protect communities. Those are the two goals, certainly among others, found in Bill C-36.

We intend to meet the deadlines that have been set by the Supreme Court in the Bedford decision and to do so in a way that we believe will improve the lives of those who choose to leave prostitution. We have put parameters in place designed specifically to protect the community, children in particular.

We hope that all members will support this effort, which will make Canadians safer.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, Cons. Ind.): Mr. Speaker, everyday Canadians are struggling with the rapidly increasing price of energy. Recent events in places like Iraq remind us that the world's dependency on conflict oil can have serious financial consequences on Canadian families and businesses.

While the world is progressing toward greater efficiency and new technologies, current events demonstrate why Canadian oil must have sustainable, efficient, and secure access to Canadian as well as global markets.

I was pleased to read the comments made by our Minister of Natural Resources in his recent meetings in New York. Could the minister share his message with the House and speak to his commitment to Canadian energy, Canadian jobs, and Canadian families?

Hon. Greg Rickford (Minister of Natural Resources and Minister for the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been tough questions today, particularly this one. I want to thank the member for Peterborough for that timely question.

Last week I promoted Canada as a reliable and safe energy partner at the North American Energy Summit, and in fact I pre-empted that in Rome.

Recent international events remind us that Canada has an important role to play in assisting our partners, countries around the world, in achieving energy security. Our energy products will remain a significant part of the global energy mix.

Our government remains committed to responsible resource development.

I thank my peer for that important question.

Government Orders

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

PROTECTION OF COMMUNITIES AND EXPLOITED PERSONS ACT

The House resumed from June 12 consideration of the motion that Bill C-36, An Act to amend the Criminal Code in response to the Supreme Court of Canada decision in Attorney General of Canada v. Bedford and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Wednesday, May 27, 2014, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at the second reading stage of Bill C-36.

Call in the members.

● (1515)

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

(Division No. 209)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Baird	Bateman
Benoit	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Falk
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goldring
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Leef
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Maguire	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Mourani	Nicholson
Norlock	O'Connor

O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Paradis
Payne	Poillievre
Preston	Rajotte
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Stanton	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Zimmer — 139	

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Bélanger	Bennett
Benskin	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Borg	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brosseau	Caron
Casey	Cash
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Christopherson
Cleary	Comartin
Côté	Crowder
Cullen	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Dubourg	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseau
Easter	Eyking
Freeland	Freeman
Garneau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Groguhé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hassainia
Hsu	Hughes
Hyer	Jacob
Jones	Julian
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Martin
Masse	Mathysen
May	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mulcair
Murray	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Pilon
Quach	Rafferty
Rankin	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sellah

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sor)
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Sullivan
Tremblay
Valeriote— 117

Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
Sitsabaiesan
Thibeault
Turnel

Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Maguire
McLeod
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Nicholson
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Payne
Preston
Reid
Richards
Saxton
Seeback
Shipley
Smith
Stanton
Sweet
Toet
Trottier
Valcourt
Van Loan
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Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
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Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
McColeman
Menegakis
Norlock
Opitz
Paradis
Poilievre
Rajotte
Rempel
Rickford
Schellenberger
Shea
Shory
Sopuck
Strahl
Tilson
Trost
Truppe
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

Nil

PAIRED

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

(Bill read the second time and referred to a committee)

* * *

STRENGTHENING CANADIAN CITIZENSHIP ACT

The House resumed from June 12 consideration of the motion that Bill C-24, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed.

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Tuesday, May 27, 2014, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at the third reading stage of Bill C-24.

• (1520)

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

(Division No. 210)

YEAS

Members

Abлонczy
Adler
Albas
Alexander
Allison
Ambrose
Armstrong
Aspin
Bateman
Bergen
Bezan
Block
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Cannan
Chong
Clement
Daniel
Dechert
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Falk
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Fletcher
Gill
Goguen
Goodyear
Gourde
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hillyer
Holder
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Lemieux

Adams
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anderson
Ashfield
Baird
Benoit
Bernier
Blaney
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Clarke
Crockatt
Davidson
Del Mastro
Dreeshen
Dykstra
Fast
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Gallant
Glover
Goldring
Gosal
Grewal
Hawn
Hiebert
Hoback
James
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Komarnicki
Lake
Leef
Leung

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Atamanenko
Bélangier
Benskin
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brousseau
Casey
Chicoine
Choquette
Cleary
Côté
Cullen
Day
Dion
Doré Lefebvre
Dubourg
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Freeland
Garneau
Genest
Giguère
Goodale
Groguhé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu
Hyer
Jones
Kellway
Lapointe
Latendresse
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leslie
MacAulay
Marston
Masse
May
McGuinty
Michaud
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nicholls

NAYS

Members

Andrews
Ashton
Aubin
Bennett
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerville
Brahmi
Caron
Cash
Chisholm
Christopherson
Comartin
Crowder
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseau
Eyking
Freeman
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Godin
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hassainia
Hughes
Jacob
Julian
Lamoureux
Larose
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu
Mai
Martin
Mathysen
McCallum
MacKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mourani
Murray
Nash
Nunez-Melo

Routine Proceedings

Pacetti	Papillon
Pilon	Quach
Rafferty	Rankin
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sellah	Sgro
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sullivan
Sitsabaiesan	Tremblay
Thibeault	Valeriotte — 118
Turmel	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Bill read the third time and passed)

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

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

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INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Delegation of the Canada-Japan Inter-parliamentary Group, respecting its participation at the co-chair's annual visit to Japan held in Tokyo, Japan, April 7-12, 2013.

Also, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1) I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canada-China Legislative Association and the Canada-Japan Inter-parliamentary Group, respecting its participation at the 34th annual assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly, held in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam, September 23, 2013.

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[Translation]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the fifth report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates in relation to its study of the government's open data practices.

[English]

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order with regard to this subject. Just over one year ago, the foreign affairs committee agreed with my request to do a study on corporate social responsibility. That was after the tragic collapse of the Rana Plaza in Bangladesh.

The committee held an additional follow-up study this year. Unfortunately, the committee decided not to produce an official report.

However, I have some good news. We have compiled a report that I would like to table now so all MPs can take a look at the findings of the foreign affairs committee as it relates to the Rana Plaza in Bangladesh.

I therefore seek unanimous consent to table, in both official languages, the report on foreign affairs committee hearings on corporate social responsibility.

• (1525)

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to table this document?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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CLIMATE CHANGE ACCOUNTABILITY ACT

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-619, an act to ensure Canada assumes its responsibilities in preventing dangerous climate change.

He said: Mr. Speaker, it is my great privilege to reintroduce into the House, seconded by the Leader of the Opposition, a bill originally put forward by Jack Layton, the climate change accountability act.

Every day in this place we put ideas and different visions of our future in opposition to each other, and that is fair enough. We imagine and hope for very different things on either side of this aisle. However, on this issue, at this time in our history, it must be different.

We have before us the challenge of climate change, a challenge that calls upon us to look beyond ourselves, beyond this time and place.

Arresting climate change is the world's struggle. Everybody must play their part. However, we in here must lead. To fail to do so would be a failing beyond us as politicians and ours as a political system, a failing more fundamental.

All of us are entrusted with the care of the earth we inhabit and the well-being of all those who inhabit it. We need, now, to act upon that responsibility.

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

* * *

INTERN PROTECTION ACT

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-620, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (training without remuneration).

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to introduce a bill that would offer the same workplace protections to unpaid interns under the Canada Labour Code that are already provided to paid employees.

Routine Proceedings

I would like to note my colleague from Davenport's exceptional work on this issue and I thank him for seconding this bill.

Youth unemployment is currently double the national average, and many companies are replacing entry-level positions with unpaid internships. In the absence of federal laws to protect them, unpaid interns are often at risk of being exploited.

In 2011, 22-year-old Edmontonian Andy Ferguson died in a head-on collision when he fell asleep at the wheel after working excessive hours, some of which were as an unpaid intern. Unfortunately, protections such as the ones in this bill were not in place when this accident occurred.

[*Translation*]

This bill will establish clear rules, particularly in relation to reasonable hours of work and protection against sexual harassment and unsafe working conditions. It will also prevent companies from turning paid jobs into unpaid internships.

I urge all of the members of the House to support my bill. It is time we put an end to the exploitation of interns and started protecting young workers.

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

* * *

[*English*]

INCOME TAX ACT

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-621, An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (economic substance).

He said: Mr. Speaker I rise to introduce an act to amend the Income Tax Act. This enactment would enable the government and courts to more effectively identify, pursue and convict tax cheats.

The amendment would require the minister or the court to take into consideration the economic substance of a transaction in determining whether it constituted an avoidance transaction and whether it resulted in a misuse or abuse of the Income Tax Act. Further, it would establish the presumption that an avoidance transaction that did not have a substantial economic substance in relation to its anticipated tax benefit resulted in a misuse or abuse of the act.

I would like to thank Dr. Robert McMechan for his expertise in proposing these legislative changes in his acclaimed book, entitled *Economic Substance and Tax Avoidance: An International Perspective*. Dr. McMechan is a former general counsel in the tax litigation section of the Department of Justice and is with us today.

Recognizing the role that these transactions play in tax avoidance and recognizing that Canada is now out of step with many other jurisdictions, this bill would help bring tax avoidance laws in Canada into closer harmony with tax avoidance measures already in place elsewhere.

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

● (1530)

NATIONAL HEALTH AND FITNESS DAY ACT

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC) moved that Bill S-211, An Act to establish a national day to promote health and fitness for all Canadians, be read the first time.

He said: Mr. Speaker, in a moment that I think will bring all members of the House together, it is a great honour to give first reading to Bill S-211.

Bill S-211 promises to create a national health and fitness day. The bill received unanimous support in the Senate last week, and it promises to help Canadians achieve higher levels of healthy physical activity, reversing trends of depression, obesity, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, and mounting health care costs. Having worked on this initiative for years, I am pleased to report that over 150 cities have already proclaimed National Health and Fitness Day.

I would like to thank the seconder, the member for Burlington; Senator Nancy Greene Raine, who brought this bill through the Senate; members all around the House who support it, including the members for Sackville—Eastern Shore, Etobicoke North, and Saanich—Gulf Islands; the Minister of Health; and the Minister of State for Sport; and the incredible volunteer parliamentary fitness coaches, Pierre Lafontaine and Phil Marsh. Together, we will make Canada the fittest nation on Earth.

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

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PROTECTING CANADIANS FROM UNSAFE DRUGS ACT (VANESSA'S LAW)

(Bill C-17. On the Order: Government Orders:)

June 13, 2014—Report stage of Bill C-17, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act—the Minister of Health.

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations with respect to the final stages of Bill C-17, Vanessa's law, and I believe you would find the unanimous consent of the House for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practices of this House, Bill C-17, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act, shall be deemed concurred in at the report stage and deemed read a third time and passed.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Routine Proceedings

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

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

ACCESS TO INFORMATION, PRIVACY AND ETHICS

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I move that the first report of the Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, presented to the House on Wednesday, February 5, 2014, be concurred in.

I always say what an honour it is to rise in this institution, but as I reflect on the government's response to the report on the Conflict of Interest Act, I have to say that I am not proud of what has been taking place in this Parliament.

We have what is being presented to the Canadian people as a Potemkin democracy. It is a false democracy. Democracy does not really happen here anymore. It is a sideshow that Canadians are being exposed to on a daily basis in a House that has become a circus, an ugly circus, a vicious circus.

What we see here is an overall attack by the government against the institutions that are supposed to maintain the credibility of the Westminster tradition, a continued unmitigated attack on the various institutions that are supposed to bring accountability to this place. As Canadians watch the daily circus show and the silliness and the way the government has dumbed down important issues into little buttons that it can press at a given moment, what we see is the bigger issue that is being deflected that the Canadian public is not seeing, which is the attack on the credibility of the institutions that would hold some level of accountability.

Let us go through the standards that are supposed to be there to ensure a functioning democracy.

We hear of MPs who go back to their ridings and when people ask about the circus that they watch on TV, they will say, "Oh, yes, but committees are where the good work is done." When I was elected 10 years ago I used to think that. I used to think that maybe on a given day it may be fairly mediocre in the House, but in committees, by and large we were there to do relatively good work, even if it was sometimes very partisan. Sometimes it was not the brightest. This is a democratic system after all, and it is what it is, depending on who is elected. However, the notion of the committee had a place. That is not true anymore. Committees have become circuses. They have become kangaroo courts. It is all done in camera or it is done to use the notion of majority to undermine even legislative positions that have existed since the Westminster tradition.

In England, in the U.K. Parliament, it is considered a failure of the committee if there is not unanimity, if one has to bring forward a minority report. Unfortunately, we are having to bring forward minority reports all the time.

Nowhere is that clearer than in the circus of what happened at the ethics committee with the review of the conflict of interest guidelines. We heard from witnesses from across the political spectrum about the need to develop a coherent set of conflict of interest guidelines to hold government and the public office holders

to account. What was delivered to the Canadian people in this report was an absolute democratic fraud.

The recommendations that were brought supposedly through the committee were never even raised by a single witness. I will get to the key recommendation, the number one recommendation that the government found in dealing with issues of conflict of interest. The conflict of interest review had raised all manner of issues, such as the need for administrative monetary penalties of a substantive nature, to ensure compliance with basic due diligence so that people were not just doing things for their friends or their pals, that there were clear rules to ensure that insiders did not have access, and that public office holders were acting in the public interest.

The number one recommendation that came out of this committee, and I want to say again it appeared in the report when we were examining it without a single witness having brought it forward, was that the definition of "public office holder" be changed. The government's notion of who will now be under the Conflict of Interest Act are the members who collectively bargain with the Government of Canada. They will now be public office holders.

What is a public office holder? A public office holder, according to the act, is a minister of the crown, a minister of state, or a parliamentary secretary. They will now have the same provisions around their conflict of interest as someone who does the vacuuming in a public office building for the federal government. Someone in Scarborough who works in a call centre for the federal government answering the phones is now going to have the same legal obligations as a minister of the crown.

●(1535)

Members of ministerial staff, all the little boys in short pants who write all those notes so the marionettes in the front row do not look so slow on a given day, and someone working in a secretarial function in an office in Calgary for the federal government will be treated as having to have the same responsibility for reporting their behaviour as the men in the little short pants who work for the Prime Minister's Office. A ministerial appointee under the Governor in Council will be treated the same as someone working at a Service Canada outlet in Moose Jaw, Kenora, or Timmins. That means there would now be between 240,000 and 300,000 people who are under the Conflict of Interest Act, whom the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner has to oversee.

The government approved this. Members of the government thought this was a good recommendation. They are laughing at us. They are laughing at the Canadian people. This is an absolute fraud of democracy when they decide that a minister of the crown, who can be bought and sold if there are not clear rules for lobbying and for conflict of interest, would be held to the same code as a person who goes into a government office in Winnipeg in the evenings and sweeps and cleans.

Routine Proceedings

The Conflict of Interest Act was one of the key provisions of the Conservatives' commitment to have themselves elected in 2006. It is notable that the Conservatives made this promise that they were going to clean up the corruption of the Liberals in 2006. Their electoral platform was to give the ethics commissioner the power to fine violators—wrong; to enshrine the conflict of interest code into law—wrong; to allow members of the public, not just politicians, to make complaints to the ethics commissioner, which did not happen; to make part-time or non-remunerated ministerial advisers subject to the ethics code. It does not say anything about making 250,000 Canadians apply under the same code, a code that has no provisions for holding these ministers to account.

There is another fascinating recommendation that the government has brought in. If one of its ministers is under investigation, it has to be kept secret. It has to be kept secret to protect their reputation. It is a government that believes in maximum secrecy for its members while insisting on maximum transparency for average Canadians. That is a fundamental failure of accountability.

We had a Conservative member from London the other day who said that if people go to a public demonstration, why should the government not be able to keep tabs on them? The Conservatives believe that being able to spy on Canadians is their right, but if their ministers are under investigation, good luck investigating them because the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner would be absolutely swamped with the 250,000 civil servants she would have to deal with. We asked the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner what she thinks of this report and she said she is extremely disappointed. Of course she is, because it is making a mockery of her position.

The conflict of interest office is just one of the attacks the Conservatives have been making. Let us look at a few others.

We saw what they did with Marc Mayrand and Elections Canada and the attack on him personally. The insinuation was that Marc Mayrand in doing his job was doing it for partisan reasons. They wanted to make it illegal in Canada for Elections Canada to be able to tell Canadians about their rights to vote. International observers said that if Canada went down this route, it would fundamentally undermine the basic notion of democratic accountability.

We saw how they attacked the Parliamentary Budget Officer. Kevin Page, one of the most respected civil servants I have met in my career, was regularly ridiculed and undermined and attacked. His job, which was to provide members of Parliament with basic financial data, was interfered with every step of the way. I have to tell people back home that the House of Commons does not oversee the spending that is going on. It is a shell game that happens here. Billions of dollars are spent in all manner of categories, and yet the government makes sure that they keep members in the House of Commons in the dark. It's as though they were raising mushrooms on what they are feeding the House of Commons when it comes to actual information.

● (1540)

The one office to provide basic financial accountability, the Parliamentary Budget Office, was considered a threat and Mr. Page had to go. That is another one of the officers of Parliament that has been undermined.

There was the latest appointment of the Privacy Commissioner. The Prime Minister ignored the recommendations of all the experts and picked Mr. Therrien, a lifelong civil servant, but one with no expertise in the privacy field. He was appointed over all the qualified people. Mr. Therrien was given a poison chalice with this appointment. As soon as Mr. Therrien was approved, the government attacked his credibility, because even Mr. Therrien, without the necessary expertise, recognized that the government's bills, Bills C-13 and S-4, on warrantless access and snooping on Canadians, were very problematic and probably were not legal.

The Privacy Commissioner was undermined. The Parliamentary Budget Officer was undermined. The Elections Canada office was undermined. Now with this report, the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner's office is being turned basically into a farce. She said that she has no ability to keep track of the 244,000 civil servants across this country when her job is supposed to be keeping an eye on a government that is mired in corruption.

These are respected institutions that provide accountability to Canadians when government does not want to be accountable. There is another key element, and that is the access to information office. The government now routinely tells the access to information officer that it will not comply with requests. It will give delays of 300, 600, 900 and 1,000 days on basic rights to access to information. Canada was a world leader on access to information 15 years ago. Now it is behind tin-pot dictatorships and third world countries in terms of providing information to citizens. The President of the Treasury Board runs around like some two-bit flim-flam artist talking about data sets and open government on his Twitter account. It is a farce. The Conservatives are making sure that the real key information that Canadians need is not being made available to them.

The Department of National Defence, the CRA, the justice department, and Indian affairs routinely stonewall and shut down the attempts of citizens and journalists to find out why decisions are made. If we do not know who was in the room when a decision was made or what source provided the information, we have no idea whether or not we are getting accountable government.

The government undermined the other institutions. We can talk about Rights and Democracy. We can talk about the round table on the environment. We can talk about Census Canada. I do not know what he is the minister of now, but he was the minister of immigration, and he is now running around trying to explain why he blew it so badly on the foreign worker program and saying he did not really have any data to go on and is having to look it up on Facebook and Kijiji. It is the same party that ridiculed and laughed at the Census Canada information that was considered the gold standard for information around the world.

There is another institution that the Conservatives attacked and undermined, and it is the one institution that so far has stood up to them. That is the Supreme Court.

Routine Proceedings

I will not mention the Senate. We were taught in school that legislation goes from the House to the so-called chamber of sober second thought, but it is full of hacks, partisans, and friends of the party who rubber stamp bills again and again. They are not doing their legislative oversight. What ends up happening is the Supreme Court has to address bills.

Before I get to the issue of the Supreme Court, let us talk about the justice department. The justice department has a job to review legislation to ensure that it is charter compliant, that it meets the overall legal framework of this country. We see time and time again the advice that is given is ignored, or perhaps the Conservatives decide to favour their political masters, because this is a government that runs and butts its head again and again on the basic issues of the Constitution and the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. They are beginning to look increasingly ridiculous. Rather than the Conservatives stepping back and saying that they have to respect the Supreme Court, even though they will respect no other institution in this country, the Prime Minister personally led an attack on the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court.

● (1545)

The Conservatives attempted to bring in a judge who was not able to sit on the Supreme Court. They had legal advice on this. They ignored it. They created an unnecessary crisis.

We saw the Conservatives' prostitution law thrown out by the Supreme Court. The Conservatives have gone right back at the Supreme Court, banging their heads against it with a bill that will also be found unconstitutional, because it ignored the fundamental issues in the Bedford decision.

Nowhere is this more obvious than on the Spencer decision last Friday that talked about the fundamental legal obligation to get a warrant to get access to IP information and cellphone information. I heard one of the parliamentary secretaries the other day saying, "Oh my God, this is going to mean a four- to six-week delay in police investigations." Nonsense. It is a one-day turnaround.

We also have, within the legal system in Canada, the right the police have, if they believe a crime is being committed, to get that information without a warrant. The proviso is that they have to be able to show to a judge later on that there was the urgency. There is still judicial oversight.

The government believes that there is no need for judicial oversight. We have a situation now where 1.2 million times a year, government agencies are grabbing information on private citizens without any apparent warrant. The government says that it is only being done in cases of extreme threat, terrorism, or violence. Obviously that is not true, given that there are 1.2 million requests a year.

All that being said, we had Vic Toews, who tried to bring in his warrantless snooping bill, who stood up in this House and told ordinary Canadians that they were on the side of child pornographers if they wanted to defend privacy rights. They put the run on Vic Toews pretty quickly.

The Conservatives then came back with Bill C-13, which would create the provisions to give legal cover for the telecoms to hand over this information, and Bill S-4, which would allow corporate

interests to get at Canadians' information without warrant or disclosure to people.

The other provision, the absolutely bizarre one, is that the Conservatives are now going to allow personal tax information to be transferred without warrant or oversight. They somehow think this is going to get past the Supreme Court. Since Friday's ruling, it is clear that it is not.

Rather than use this institution for the benefit of all Canadians to ensure that we have clear, definable rules in this country, we are going to see the government running and butting its head against the Supreme Court and then howling like a victim when the Supreme Court does what its job is to do, which is to maintain legislative and constitutional obligations.

This brings me back to the Conflict of Interest Act. The government's response and its recommendations, which will protect its ministers, will dilute the act and turn the office of accountability into an unmanageable and unenforceable branch. It has completely broken the commitment it made in 2006 to Canadians.

It was very interesting when we heard from Ms. Dawson, the commissioner, the other day. We asked her about one of the most serious cases we have had in memory in terms of a breach of the act, which was the secret payment made out of the Prime Minister's Office to a sitting senator.

I am not a lawyer, but when I read section 16 of the Parliament of Canada Act, it says to make a payment to a sitting senator to make a political problem go away is an indictable offence. The RCMP chose not to follow through. The RCMP said that there was nothing to see here, ladies and gentlemen, move on, yet when we looked at Corporal Horton's ITO, there were serious questions about who was involved in that \$90,000, and it was clearly an issue of quid pro quo.

If the RCMP is not going to follow through, and the RCMP said that it had received all the legal advice necessary but did not appear to have talked to the Department of Public Prosecutions, which has oversight in this, then the issue goes back to Mary Dawson. Mary Dawson has no ability to go after the senators. The senators are in a closed world unto themselves. However, Mary Dawson does have the authority to investigate Nigel Wright. She says that she is not investigating Nigel Wright, because she is under the impression that the \$90,000 was still under investigation by the RCMP. I find that surprising, because I do not know how it could be illegal to receive the money but not illegal to pay the money. I am not exactly sure. I think Ms. Dawson would do us all a favour if she could explain.

● (1550)

This is the kind of work Ms. Dawson is intended to do. It is to ensure that secret payments are not made to insiders, that backroom pals do not have access that ordinary Canadians do not have. This is why we were supposed to have the Federal Accountability Act. Unfortunately, with the motion and the report, the government has signalled that it has no intention of following through on those commitments.

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I hate to bring it up, but when it comes to ethical issues, the NDP has a lot to answer for. There is the over \$1 million in mailings. We have a situation where the NDP has used parliamentary office space for political purposes. We all know that this is a big no-no.

I am not sure if Mary Dawson has the jurisdiction to check those items out, but certainly those who do have the jurisdiction have condemned the NDP for doing something that every member of the House knows not to do. We do not use third-party printers. We do not do clandestine mailings. We do not use parliamentary resources for political purposes.

I wonder if the member could reflect on all the ethical breaches the NDP has undertaken in the last little while.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I think that is a great question, because it shows people the kind of circus Parliament has become. We have a report on the legal obligations of an officer of Parliament, and they turn it into a clown show, just the way they have with parliamentary committees. I do not know if the member was here when I was speaking about how the committees have become a functional joke of the House. They are going to take that and run a kangaroo court. The hon. member cannot even get his story straight, that the NDP used parliamentary office space.

• (1555)

Mr. Peter Julian: That is idiotic.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Why not say that, Mr. Speaker? This has become the circus they run, where they get everyone running after some false thing, while they are ignoring the fact that they are stripping the basic obligation to hold government to account.

My hon. colleague will no doubt come out next and say that the NDP sank the lost continent of Atlantis and should have to pay it back. I am sure they will say that. The fact is, we are dealing with a report that is undermining the basic legitimacy of this parliamentary tradition, yet we see Bozo the clowns on the back bench jumping up and down and cheering whenever the government throws red meat at them.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it was the House administration that ruled that the NDP was breaking the rules in regard to the satellite office and the mailings. Canadians need to be concerned about the unethical behaviour of the NDP leader and members of its caucus on this issue.

That said, when we think of wasting time, the member knows full well that we have been looking toward debating legislation as we wind down to what will likely be the end of the session by Friday. He has chosen to present this motion, which will no doubt precipitate yet another half hour of bell ringing. We have lost the opportunity to bring forward petitions today. For example, I was wanting to bring forward my petition on the OAS and CPP, which our pensioners treat as very important. Then we would get on to government bills and working hard, as opposed to what we see with the New Democrats, which on three separate occasions has moved for adjournment.

Why is the NDP and its leader choosing to be lazy and to not do the work Canadians expect us to do here in the House of Commons?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Lazy, Mr. Speaker, I love that from a guy whose leader does not show up for work except once a week. I get a kick out of my friend. He is sort of like the Ezra Levant of the Liberal Party. We have heard of ethical oil. Now we hear of ethical Liberals.

I have never seen a man who complains more when he is asked to show up and actually debate substantive issues. We are debating the undermining of the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. That is what we are debating here, and he is outraged. He thinks this is an impediment to the work of democracy because he wants to go home. He can go home any time he wants. His leader left ages ago, so I am sure no one will notice. However, our job is to look at conflict of interest.

When the Conflict of Interest Act was first brought in, it was to deal with the corruption of the Liberal Party. I know that they do not want to ever have any rules on it, but I would like to think that he would start looking across the bench to his dear friends on the corruption that is going on under them as they dismantle the Federal Accountability Act.

I thank my colleague, Ezra. Any time he wants to discuss laziness in the House of Commons, I think it is a great issue, and I would certainly love to meet his temporary boss at some point on the issue as well.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I certainly enjoyed the remarks of the member for Timmins—James Bay, who has been doggedly determined in pushing the government on a whole range of ethical issues, ethical lapses, and misspending. No government in history, even worse than the Liberals, has been so appallingly bad at public accountability. The Conservatives are just awful. What they have also done is just destroy due process. They have destroyed the BOIE, which used to function according to consensus. They have destroyed that, and now they believe that they can just rule by partisan Conservative decree.

I ask my colleague from Timmins—James Bay, who has been extraordinary in this House and has more credibility than the entire Conservative caucus put together on issues of conflict of interest and issues of ethics, how come the government thinks it can get away with anything? The Conservatives have attacked viciously the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. They attacked the Chief Electoral Officer. They attacked the Parliamentary Budget Officer. They simply have no shame. How can they get away with it, and what can Canadians do who want to get rid of the government in 2015?

• (1600)

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, this is a fundamentally important issue we are debating. We see that the Conservatives have turned the House of Commons into a circus. We have seen that they have taken the traditional work of committees and turned them into trained marionettes or soft puppets, but what holds Parliament to account are the officers of Parliament.

Routine Proceedings

This report we are debating is a serious report. We can look at all the recommendations that were brought forward by men and women of all political stripes who believe in accountable government, regardless of what political party one is from.

We see the Conservatives turning this into a circus, and we see the Liberals not wanting to discuss it. We are talking about an act that was put in place to hold government leaders to account. Instead, and this is the ultimate circus and fraud we are seeing, 244,000 civil servants will now be treated, under this act, the same as key ministers, key deputy ministers, political partisan staff of the Prime Minister's Office, and the person cleaning the office in Winnipeg. They will be treated the same as one of the Prime Minister's insider friends, like Bruce Carson. It is a joke.

Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member opposite talked about different things that undermine this Parliament. There are a number of things, and he happens to be one of them. He has criticized every party and anyone who has not agreed with him. He has refused to answer any questions that have been put to him in this entire debate.

The question that needs to be asked and continually will not be answered by the member is when the NDP will repay what they took from taxpayers that was against the rules. It has been ruled by the non-partisan staff of this place that the NDP broke the rules, took the \$1.7 million, and took off with it. We are talking also about the revelations of the scandal that saw the House of Commons staff, taxpayer-paid staff, now housed in partisan—

Mr. Don Davies: What about your mailings? Look at the Liberal mailings. Come on. Hypocrite.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Deputy Speaker: Order. The member is running out of time. We have less than 30 seconds.

The member for Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, I would ask the folks back home, what kind of mailings have they received from the Conservative Party? Those ridiculous, crazy attack mailings about the NDP and its carbon tax, the NDP breaking up the country, and how the NDP is a threat to life itself. The folks back home should think of all the crap they have received from the Conservative Party paid for by the taxpayer and then look at the members on the other side. Do they trust them? I would not.

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Mr. Speaker, I am rising on a point of order. During the last question exchange, I do not know if you heard it, but I did, the use of unparliamentary language by the member for Vancouver Kingsway.

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, there was no unparliamentary language used whatsoever. I used the word “hypocrisy” in the House and if I did use the word “hypocrite”, I stand by it.

The Deputy Speaker: The member knows that the use of the term “hypocrite” is unparliamentary. The term “hypocrisy” is permitted within the context. I would have to ask the member to withdraw the comment.

Mr. Don Davies: Mr. Speaker, I happily withdraw the comment “hypocrite” and stand by my comment that the government is marked by hypocrisy.

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I move:

That the debate be now adjourned.

● (1605)

The Deputy Speaker: The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1640)

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

(Division No. 211)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Bateman	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Dreeshen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Dykstra
Falk	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hillyer
Hoback	Holder
James	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Leef	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon

Lobb
Lunney
Maguire
McLeod
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Nicholson
O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Payne
Preston
Reid
Richards
Saxton
Seeback
Shiple
Smith
Sorenson
Strahl
Tilson
Trost
Truppe
Van Kesteren
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilks
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 137

Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
McColeman
Menegakis
Norlock
Oliver
Opitz
Paradis
Poilievre
Rajotte
Rempel
Rickford
Schellenberger
Shea
Shory
Sopuck
Stanton
Sweet
Toet
Trottier
Valcourt
Van Loan
Warawa
Watson
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Atamanenko
Bélangier
Benskin
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau
Casey
Chicoine
Choquette
Cleary
Crowder
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseault
Eyking
Freeman
Garrison
Giguère
Goodale
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Julian
Lamoureux
Larose
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu
Mai
Masse
May
McGuinty
Michaud
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Nantel
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Quach
Rankin
Regan
Saganash

Andrews
Ashton
Aubin
Bennett
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Brahmi
Caron
Cash
Chisholm
Christopherson
Côté
Cullen
Day
Dion
Doré Lefebvre
Dubourg
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Freeland
Garneau
Genest
Godin
Gravelle
Hsu
Jones
Kellway
Lapointe
Latendresse
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leslie
MacAulay
Marston
Mathysen
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Murray
Nicholls
Pacetti
Pilon
Rafferty
Raynault
Rousseau
Sandhu

Routine Proceedings

Scarpaleggia
Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Sitsabaesan
Tremblay
Valeriote — 105

Scott
Sgro
Sullivan
Turnel

PAIRED

Nil

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

[Translation]

It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Etobicoke North, Foreign Affairs; the hon. member for Lac-Saint-Louis, The Environment.

* * *

PETITIONS

CANADA POST

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition concerning the cuts to Canada Post, including the elimination of door-to-door delivery, which will have a significant impact on the people of LaSalle—Émard. I can assure you that this is just the first of many petitions.

Hundreds of people in LaSalle—Émard have signed this petition, which addresses the elimination of door-to-door delivery, as I mentioned, the reduction in services and the loss of 6,000 to 8,000 jobs. People are worried that this will lead to the privatization of Canada Post.

The petitioners are suggesting that the government review its cuts and consider other options.

● (1645)

[English]

ANAPHYLAXIS

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present a petition on behalf of Canadians residing in Ontario.

It was recognized by this House, by adopting Motion No. 230, that anaphylaxis is a serious concern for an increasing number of Canadians. Therefore, the petitioners request that Parliament enact a policy to reduce the risk for anaphylactic passengers that would be applicable to all forms of passenger transportation falling within its jurisdiction.

CANADA POST

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on behalf of several Prince Edward Islanders who are concerned about the cuts at Canada Post. They are concerned that 6,000 to 8,000 workers will lose their jobs and that this will disproportionately affect the disabled and seniors. These petitioners are saying that Canada Post offers a public service that needs to be protected, and they call upon the government to reverse the cuts to services and to look for ways to innovate in areas such as postal banking.

Routine Proceedings

CRIMINAL CODE

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have 3,709 signatures on a petition today asking the government to amend the Criminal Code to target the johns and give support to those who desire to leave prostitution. It is a shame that a few minutes ago, opposition parties voted against Bill C-36.

ASBESTOS

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am proud to present a petition, signed by literally tens of thousands of Canadians, who call upon Parliament and the House of Commons to ban asbestos in all of its forms. They point out that asbestos is the greatest industrial killer that the world has ever known, and that more Canadians now die from asbestos than all other industrial and occupational causes combined. They call upon the government to also stop blocking international health and safety conventions designed to help protect workers from asbestos, such as the Rotterdam Convention.

PENSIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to table a petition from my constituents with regard to the old age security program, in opposition to the government's and the Prime Minister's decision to increase the age of retirement from 65 to 67. They believe that people should continue to have the option to retire at the age of 65 and ask that the government not in any way diminish the importance and value of Canada's three major seniors programs: OAS, GIS, and CPP.

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Jim Hillyer (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have several hundred signatures on this petition, which calls upon the government and Parliament to criminalize the purchase of sex with a woman, man, or child, and to criminalize pimps, madams, and others who profit from the sex trade.

[*Translation*]

CANADA POST

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition that is protesting the cuts at Canada Post. The petitioners, from my riding of Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, are protesting the elimination of door-to-door delivery and higher stamp prices.

This petition is in addition to the hundreds of signatures that have already been collected. The petitioners are calling on the Conservatives to take action and force Canada Post to serve rural regions and the regions that need it.

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two very timely petitions.

The first is from residents in Vancouver and my riding calling on the government to refuse to approve the Enbridge risky pipeline and tanker scheme.

AGRICULTURE

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my second petition relates to the bill we are debating today, Bill C-18. The petitioners, from Killaloe in Ontario, Edmonton, Victoria, Mill Bay, Salt Spring Island, and other areas in my riding, are calling on the House to ensure we protect plant breeders' rights, not erode them into a mere privilege, and ensure the right of farmers to continue to save, reuse, select, and exchange seeds.

FALUN GONG

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition with over 60 signatures. The petitioners are requesting that the Canadian Parliament pass a resolution to establish measures to stop the crimes of the Chinese communist regime of systematically murdering Falun Gong practitioners for their organs, and maintain Canadian legislation to combat forced organ harvesting. They publicly call for an end to the persecution of Falun Gong in China.

• (1650)

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition in support of fair employment insurance. The petitioners, most of them from my riding of St. John's East, say that Canadians pay into the insurance plan throughout their working lives because they believe the benefits will be available if they lose their jobs. It was designed to strengthen the workforce by helping jobless Canadians resume careers that take advantage of their education and training. However, with six out of 10 workers already disqualified from EI, the government is further restricting access, requiring Canadians to accept any jobs it deems suitable, even if it takes them off their career paths and comes with a 30% pay cut and an hour-long commute.

Therefore, the petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to reverse the devastating changes made to EI and restore fair access to decent EI benefits for jobless workers.

[*Translation*]

WETLAND PROTECTION

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present four petitions.

The first petition calls on the government to decontaminate the former Saint-Maurice shooting range as soon as possible and to ensure that the wetland and the imperilled flora and fauna in the ecosystem are protected and preserved. This area is in my riding, in the city of Terrebonne. People really care about wetland protection. All of the petitioners are from Terrebonne.

CANADA POST

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the other three petitions are all on the same subject. The petitioners are asking the Government of Canada to reject Canada Post's proposed service cuts and explore other options to modernize the crown corporation's business plan.

They are especially worried about the plan to cut home mail delivery and the impact this will have on seniors and people with reduced mobility in the community.

[English]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present two petitions to the House.

The first is with respect to the proposal to reverse the flow of the 40-year-old pipeline that runs between Sarnia and Montreal, known as line 9. The petitioners consider this pipeline and the reversal of that flow to be an urgent threat to the city of Toronto and its watershed, and call upon the Government of Canada to intervene immediately to stop the development of the Sarnia-Montreal line 9 pipeline.

FEDERAL LANDS IN DURHAM REGION

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition has to do with the government's proposal to build an airport on the federal lands in Durham region, which are class one farmlands. The petitioners call upon the government to rescind all plans for an airport and non-agricultural uses on the federal lands in Durham region, and to act instead to preserve the watersheds and agricultural land of this irreplaceable natural resource for the long-term benefit of all Canadians.

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have tabled many petitions with respect to the ACR passenger service. I am pleased to table 18 of those petitions today, with hundreds of names. Most of the petitioners are from the riding of Sault Ste. Marie, and rightly so. They would like to have their voices heard here in the House of Commons.

These petitions are about the fact that people were not broadly consulted as stakeholders in the decision by the government to remove funding to the ACR passenger service. Although the government has reinstated some funding, only for another year, the petitioners remain concerned that the current government is not committed to tourism in northern Ontario, nor is it committed to the health and safety and the accessibility of these areas.

Again, I am pleased to table these petitions on behalf of people who are mostly from the Sault Ste. Marie riding and my riding, and from Ottawa and Toronto, and from a variety of people who have signed these petitions.

[Translation]

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition from citizens who believe that the mandate of the Office of the Extractive Sector Corporate Social

Routine Proceedings

Responsibility Counsellor, which was created in 2009 to provide constructive solutions to conflicts between affected communities and Canadian mining companies operating abroad, is too weak to resolve conflicts and has not provided useful solutions to communities. The petitioners are asking the government to create a legislated extractive sector ombudsman mechanism in Canada.

• (1655)

[English]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to table this afternoon.

We heard the story today of Andy Ferguson who, as an unpaid intern, worked an incredibly long shift, drove home, fell asleep at the wheel, and crashed and tragically died. This is why so many people have signed the national urban worker strategy petition. It calls on the government to take the issues of unpaid interns seriously, to build more protection, to encourage provinces to crack down on and enforce the rules that are already in place, and to close the gaps where they exist. The folks who signed this petition want the government to take that issue very seriously.

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the other petition I have is also very pertinent to issues we are discussing in the House these days, and this is the case of Oscar Vigil. Oscar came to Canada as a refugee from El Salvador. His wife and children gained Canadian citizenship, and now the government wants to send him back to El Salvador. This petition urges the government to reconsider that decision and to keep Oscar Vigil with his family here in Canada.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ALFALFA

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, constituents have sent me two sets of petitions calling for a moratorium on the release of genetically modified alfalfa in order to allow for a review of the impact on Canadian farmers.

AGRICULTURE

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am also tabling a petition on Bill C-18, calling on Parliament to refrain from making changes that would restrict farmers' rights or add to farmers' costs in the context of saving, reusing, selectively exchanging, and selling seeds.

CANADA PENSION PLAN

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I also have a petition from the Municipal Pension Retirees' Association on the Canada Pension Plan death benefits.

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, lastly I have a petition calling for the creation of a legislative extractive sector ombudsman.

Government Orders

[Translation]

GRENVILLE CANAL

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to rise in the House today to present this petition on behalf of my constituents in Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel. They are asking the government to help them with the cost of repairing and restoring the shoreline and the walls of the Grenville Canal.

This petition was signed by people from all over the RCM of Argenteuil and several municipalities, including Saint-André-d'Argenteuil, Lachute and Brownsburg-Chatham. They know that the Grenville Canal in Grenville has implications for tourism throughout the Argenteuil region. That is why they are asking the government to help with this project.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 485 to 488 could be made orders for return, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 485—**Mr. Charlie Angus:**

With regard to access to information requests to government departments, institutions and agencies for each year from 2003 to 2013: (a) how many requests were made in total, broken down by department, institution, or agency; (i) what was the average number of days taken to process these requests; (ii) what was the method by which a delay to a request was determined; (iii) is there a formula by which the number of days of delay is quantitatively determined; (iv) what was the number of requests signed by the Minister before being sent out; (v) what was the number of days delayed per request waiting for the Minister's signature; (vi) what was the number of requests that ministerial staff questioned, requested or demanded modifications to to the Access to Information and Privacy Directorate (ATIP); (vii) what was the number of requests modified after questions, requests, or demands by staff in the Minister's office; (viii) what was the average delay per request due to questions, requests, or demands by staff in the Minister's office; (b) of those requests identified in (v) and (vi), how many have been reported to the Office of the Information Commissioner, broken down by department, institution or agency; (c) do policies exist to minimize delays, broken down by (i) department, institution, or agency; (ii) are they formal or informal policies; (iii) were there cases where these policies could not be applied and, if so, how many; (iv) of those times in (iii), what was the reason; (v) of those in (iii), what was the length of delay; and (d) did weekly meetings organized by the ATIP Directorate occur, broken down by department, institution, or agency and, if so, (i) did staff from the Minister's office attend; (ii) did staff from the Minister's office play an active role; (iii) did staff from the Minister's office flag files in any capacity and, if so, on what basis; (iv) did staff from the Minister's office ask questions, make requests or demands to the ATIP Directorate?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 486—**Mr. Charlie Angus:**

With regard to on-reserve educational facilities for First Nations in Canada: (a) what requests for capital building expenditure funding for the purposes of acquiring, building, expanding, improving or replacing educational facilities have been made from 2008 to the present; (b) which of these requests have been granted by the government and why; (c) which of these requests were denied and why; (d) which of these requests were delayed, by whom (i.e. government or band council), by how long, and why; (e) what funds have been committed by the government for capital

building expenditure for the purposes of acquiring, building, expanding, improving or replacing educational facilities on-reserve in each fiscal year from 2008-2009 to 2013-2014; (f) what on-reserve educational facilities projects are currently underway; (g) in each year since 2008, what projects have been delayed or postponed, and, if any, what were the justifications for and lengths of these delays; (h) what projects are slated to begin work in the 2014-2015 fiscal year; (i) what portion of the total cost of these projects is being funded by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) through capital building infrastructure; (j) how many projects included additional money from a First Nation to complete the construction or for the equipping of an educational facility; (k) what on-reserve educational facilities projects are slated to begin work beyond the 2014-2015 fiscal year; (l) how many communities with projects identified by INAC as priority capital projects have had letters of approval issued to them; (m) since 2008, what amounts from the "Community Infrastructure" line item have been reallocated either within INAC or to other government departments; (n) with regard to capital building expenditure funding for the purposes of acquiring, building, expanding, improving or replacing educational facilities built on First Nations Reserves for each year from 2008 to the present, broken down by (i) year and (ii) community, how much money was planned but not spent on schools and why?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 487—**Mr. Justin Trudeau:**

With regard to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, since 2011 inclusive: (a) for each province or territory, and for each Census Metropolitan Area or Economic Region, what is (i) the total number of applications for a Labour Market Opinion, (ii) the number of applications approved, (iii) the number of applications denied, (iv) the average length of time between the receipt of an application and the issuance of the decision; and (b) for each province or territory, what is (i) the total number of applications for an Accelerated Labour Market Opinion, (ii) the number of applications approved, (iii) the number of applications denied, (iv) the average length of time between the receipt of an application and the issuance of the decision?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 488—**Mr. Justin Trudeau:**

With regard to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program: (a) what oversight mechanisms are in place to monitor compliance; (b) who conducts workplace inspections; (c) how many persons responsible for inspection have been employed each year since 2006 inclusive; and (d) how many workplace inspections have been carried out each year since 2006, broken down by (i) province or territory of workplace, (ii) Census Metropolitan Area or Economic Region?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

PROHIBITING CLUSTER MUNITIONS ACT

BILL C-6—TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

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

That, in relation to Bill C-6, An Act to implement the convention on cluster munitions, not more than five further hours shall be allotted to the consideration at report stage of the Bill and five hours shall be allotted to the consideration at third reading stage of the said Bill; and

Government Orders

that, at the expiry of the five hours provided for the consideration at report stage and the five hours provided for the consideration at third reading stage of the said Bill, any proceedings before the House shall be interrupted, if required for the purpose of this Order, and in turn every question necessary for the disposal of the said stages of the Bill then under consideration shall be put forthwith and successively, without further debate or amendment.

• (1700)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise to first of all underline a number that was just mentioned, and that is number 73. This is the 73rd time that the government has decided to shut down debate and put time allocation on something as important as our international obligations on a treaty that the government, frankly, has bungled.

I say that with great sadness, because this was a treaty that was negotiated years ago. The first attempt that the government made to actually implement the treaty came from the other place, which was another snub to democracy. The government, at one time when it was in opposition, talked about the importance of debate and the importance of having engaged parliamentarians to make sure that everyone was well informed.

What the Conservatives are actually doing is shutting down debate for their own members on something as important as our international obligations. If members from the Conservative Party wanted to debate this and be on the record for how they support the government's own legislation, they are shut down. It is not just about this side. It is about their side.

I remember very well the minister, who is looking over here with great big eyes open, arguing in opposition how important it was that they would have debate. I remember they were so aghast with Mr. Chrétien shutting down debate at the time.

I want to ask the government why it is shutting down debate on a bill. We are talking about report-stage amendments. This is a bill that is so flawed that the International Red Cross, which never speaks publicly on bills, has said it is a flawed bill. The former prime minister of Australia said the same.

How can Conservatives shut down debate on something as important as our obligations? By design, they are muzzling and shutting down debate for their own members to bring up their points of view for this important legislation.

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what we have seen from the opposition, particularly the official opposition, is members want to debate things forever. They never want things to come to a vote. Their objective is to be able to rail in the House and say we have 77 bills that have had time allocated.

Mr. Peter Julian: Seventy-three.

Hon. John Baird: The reality is that is what they want. I would ask the member for Ottawa Centre how long he would like to debate the bill.

The government listened very closely to the debate on the bill at committee. We brought forward thoughtful and considered amendments. We tried to work with the opposition. We came forward with a substantial amendment. The member opposite pooh-poohs it and that is unfortunate.

The motion calls for 10 hours more of debate. The first time the member had an opportunity to question the minister, all he did was rant about not having enough time to debate it. He did not even use the time available that he had to debate the bill. It is all about process. It is all a big sham.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, currently the debate is about process. We are talking about time allocation being used as a tool to prevent members from being able to engage on important pieces of legislation.

Never before has a government used time allocation in the fashion in which the majority Conservative government has. Ironically, I have been saying that for the 25-plus times that the government has brought in time allocation. Time allocation is a normal part of the process of a majority government attitude in terms of pushing things through.

I want to be sensitive to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in terms of his assertions. Yes, the NDP is almost gleeful every time the government brings forward time allocation for different reasons than us. There are some non-controversial pieces of legislation that should be able to pass without time allocation. There are other pieces for which the government needs to recognize the value of having more time allocated. Some legislation is more controversial than other legislation. I wonder if the member would like to provide comment on that aspect of House negotiations.

• (1705)

The Deputy Speaker: Before the minister responds, I would remind all members and perhaps those people watching that what is relevant in this half-hour debate is both the procedural motion that is before us and the bill itself that is also before us.

The hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, thank you for your very thoughtful intervention. Once again, you have distinguished yourself as a wise helmsman of this place.

I am surprised by my friend from Winnipeg on his thoughtful intervention. What we should be able to do is have the different parties in this place sit down and say, "This bill is a really consequential and important bill. We have a lot of members who want to contribute and participate in the debate. Could we have five days of debate on it?"

This bill is not quite as consequential. It is shorter. It had good hearings. The government came forward and amended the bill to make it better when we listened and heard what we did at hearings. However, we do not see that. What we see from the official opposition is it just wants to be able to put one more notch on its desk with another time allocation motion, rather than standing up and entertaining a reasonable discussion about what we can do. That is really unfortunate.

Government Orders

When I was the opposition house leader in the Province of Ontario, we sat down with the government and developed a programming motion with the Liberal government of the day. We said, “Here are our 10 bills that we debated this fall. We will have so much time for all the bills.” Then we could negotiate. “We want five days of debate on this one. This one is inconsequential. We are happy to debate it in two hours.” However, we do not see that from this official opposition.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, my friend, the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, seems to be mistaken. He seems to think that the official opposition is imposing these closures and taking pleasure in them. Clearly, it is, of course, the Conservative administration that is breaking all records. The reason that the process of speeding bills through and closing debate comes up in debate is that we are now in the half-hour period, during which, Mr. Speaker, you have reminded us, both the content of the legislation and the fact that we are once again being forced to abridge the debate to pass it quickly are relevant points to make.

For a smaller party, such as the Green Party, the Bloc, and for any independent members here, every time that bills are moved to time allocation, and this is the 73rd time, it guarantees that no one in our position will have a chance to speak in debate. This is a small matter for the rest of the House, but it matters consequentially to my constituents because they want to hear what I have to say about the cluster munitions bill. I worked very hard going before committee, without being a member of committee, to put forward multiple amendments that were rejected. We can do better as a country. We can do better and not be one of those countries that is dragged into the cluster munitions treaty with the weakest implementing legislation of any of our allies. We can do better.

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member opposite for her comments, but she had the opportunity to go to committee. She had the opportunity to spend as much time as she wanted at committee presenting amendments, having those amendments debated and then committee members actually had a vote on those amendments. How much time would she like to see us debate the bill in this place: 10 hours, 20 hours, a million hours?

What the official opposition wants to do, and it seems to me that it is a green-orange coalition in this regard, is to drag the debate out over every single piece of legislation and invite the government to bring in a motion to allocate time for further debate. It is 10 more hours of further debate. It is five hours at report stage and five hours at third reading. That is a heck of a lot more than most legislatures and most parliaments would give to report stage.

● (1710)

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, I thought I was the minister's friend from Winnipeg. If the minister decides that he wants to be friends with the third party, I guess that is his prerogative, although I must object. I feel slighted.

I would like the minister to comment on the process. Why is the opposition delaying our time here with concurrence motions when we could be debating? Why are they filibustering so we cannot debate until midnight and get things done for Canadians? Also, perhaps the minister could also tell us how his portfolio is going in general.

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, the member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia is not my friend, he is my brother, my brother from another mother. He is my brother in the cause of peace, prosperity, and freedom, my Conservative brother from Winnipeg.

What we have seen is discussions in this place are becoming absurd. The opposition does not want the legislative process. Part of the legislative process is having a vote, standing up and being counted.

If the opposition members disagree or are not thrilled with a piece of legislation, they just do not want a vote to ever happen. They are so convinced that they are right on every issue that they feel that if they can just drag it out, eventually people will see the wisdom of their views.

If opposition members want to debate something consequential, they could say, “Let us work with the government. We will have less debate on this bill and more debate on that bill. This one has had really good committee hearings. It has been robust.” Unfortunately, that is not what we have seen.

I would be very pleased to say to the member from Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia that we could talk about other issues after this debate.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a simple question for my hon. colleague and Conservative friend.

Why does my colleague not want me to express my opinion on this bill? It is especially important that I express my views, considering I represent a riding that has a Canadian Forces base.

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleague from Chicoutimi—Le Fjord to know that debate is welcome.

In the resolution we just presented in the House, we are proposing 10 more hours of debate. I am sure that a member with considerable influence can talk to his whip so that he can speak to the debate at report stage or at third reading.

Since the NDP whip, the hon. member for Hull—Aylmer is here, I would like her to know that our colleague from Chicoutimi—Le Fjord would like to take part in the debate. He represents a riding that has a military base, so I would like to hear his observations and those of his constituents.

[*English*]

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

I will tell him a little story. I was working on the Sable Island bill about this time last year. I thought that we would do things a little differently. I worked with the parliamentary secretary for environment, and the Liberal House leader. We negotiated. We wanted to get this through, so we suggested having the NDP put up four speakers, the Conservatives four speakers, and the Liberals two speakers. We actually had a plan. We said, “All right, deal”, and we shook on it.

Government Orders

I came in this House, and the government House leader walked in and moved time allocation. We had a situation, maybe because women were involved, where we actually negotiated and did things a little differently.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Megan Leslie: I am getting heckled by women on the other side of the House. That is odd.

We tried to do something differently. I would not say the government House leader has exactly mastered the fine art of negotiation.

My question is for the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Will the minister talk to his House leader and beg him to just negotiate once in a while? We are willing to negotiate on this side.

• (1715)

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, first, I totally reject the sexist allegation that the member has attributed to my House leader.

I have known the government House leader for probably 30 years. He is a distinguished parliamentarian, someone who always wants to reach across the party lines, and to work with people for the good of Parliament.

I am astonished, frankly, that a distinguished member of this House would suggest any nefarious attitude that the government House leader might have exercised or demonstrated. I am shocked.

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have worked with the Minister of Foreign Affairs. When he was the government House leader, I gave him credit for being a negotiator and a respectful person. We made deals when I was the party whip for the NDP.

However the government House leader today has a closed door. He is one who has come in with more time allocations than we have ever seen. He just does not care about Parliament.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs knows that. I believe the Minister of Foreign Affairs knows that a debate is not a one-way street. It is not only the opposition that gets up, but the government gets up to present its bills. I would bet that tonight we are probably not going to see even one Conservative getting up to speak on the bill.

Normally the Minister of Foreign Affairs is a very reasonable person, and people kind of like him around here.

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, to have to compare the former government House leader with the current one is unfair to the member for York—Simcoe, the government House leader. Not everyone is as non-partisan and reasonable as I am.

The member opposite knows that when I was government House leader, we did not bring in time allocation motions. I was always willing to work with the opposition. However, we had a different official opposition in those days, not the crew opposite.

The Deputy Speaker: I know there are members on the government side standing. There is a priority in this debate for questions and comments are given to the opposition parties.

The member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I find troubling the suggestion by some of the members on the other side that this debate was triggered by this side. It was the government that brought forward the time allocation motion instead of debating a very important bill. Our country signed on to a treaty in 2008 and we have waited this long to have legislation in this place that we can debate.

Yes, this bill merits a lot of time debating. There have been serious concerns raised about the bill by the former prime minister of Australia, by the Red Cross, by the country of Norway. The bill, as put forward by the government, has some deep seated problems that some nations have suggested could completely unseat this convention.

This is a convention that is meant to protect the world's children from being maimed or killed. If ever there were a time when a bill merited hearing the voices of the representatives in our country, I would suggest this is the time. Shame on the government for trying to shut down debate.

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, our legislation fully implements Canada's commitment to the convention and it is in line with key allies, including Australia and the United Kingdom. We regret that President Obama does not support the convention and the United States will not join.

We are, however, coming forward with legislation that is fully aligned with the convention. We have gone so far as to say that Canada has never used cluster munitions, ever. We will completely destroy the entire stockpile that exists within the Canadian Armed Forces. The Chief of the Defence Staff appeared before the committee and was very clear that his troops, when they were pursuing other missions, would never drop these munitions.

We are hearing an honest difference of opinion in one part, but for the most part there is agreement, we are 99.9%. There is just that one tiny example, which I do not believe will ever happen. That is why the convention was negotiated with this clause and that is why the legislation has been proposed.

I understand the member opposite has a reasonable difference of opinion, but that does not mean we can have a debate forever to try to stop something from going through. The Canadian people have elected representatives and part of a good debate is having a vote.

• (1720)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I seriously think that the Conservatives no longer want to govern. They are all simply fed up because this is the 73rd time they are putting a time limit on debate.

I heard the minister say that this was part of a discussion in committee. How many members are in committee? There may be a dozen or so, five or six from the Conservative side and four or five from the opposition. That is not a lot of MPs discussing this famous bill. We can hardly call that democratic.

Government Orders

What is more, we know how things operate in committee. When it is time to vote, the debate is not adjourned. Instead, the committee goes in camera and the vote is held. Then, since the Conservatives have the majority, we cannot talk about what happened in committee or about the bill in question.

There is a word to describe that type of behaviour, but I will not use it out of respect for Canadian society. However, minimizing interventions is not the right thing to do; neither is going directly to a vote. We have seen this formula 73 times.

Where does democracy fit into all this?

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, I have good news for my friend, the member opposite. We are not going straight to a vote. There will be five hours of debate at report stage and a further five hours of debate at third reading. That is ten hours of additional debate.

The member opposite said that there were only a few members on the committee who could participate, and that is wrong. The member for Saanich—Gulf Islands is not on the committee and, as is her right, she showed up at the committee. She participated in it. She presented amendments. Members do not have to be on the committee. If members felt this was important, they could simply show up and participate. There was no time allocation on committee. It could have gone on even longer if people had more amendments.

If the member opposite thought it was important, she could have showed up and participated in committee.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask a question directly to the details of the bill.

Some of our allies have adopted the exact interoperability language that is found within the convention. Will the Minister of Foreign Affairs advise us why the government has not done this also?

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, we have a different legislative framework in Canada, but our commitment to the prohibition of these terrible weapons of mass destruction is real and strong.

There is one small issue. For example, if a Canadian such as Walt Natynczyk, the former chief of the defence staff, were participating in a foreign mission that somehow might be complicit, or if a Canadian was refuelling a plane in Newfoundland that may or may not contain cluster munitions, for example, from the Obama administration's armed forces, that might be somehow illegal, we wanted to have a small provision, which is allowed for in the convention, to protect members of the Canadian Forces so they would not be brought up for international prosecution.

The bill is fair and reasonable. We listened at committee. I became personally involved. The member for Tobique—Mactaquac, working with some of the opposition members, came forward. He wanted it to be stronger, clearer in language, and the government's response was absolutely. We amended the bill to make it stronger. The member for Tobique—Mactaquac did a tremendous job on this. He made the bill even stronger after listening to witnesses, and we welcomed that.

I worked with the member for Ottawa Centre and the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie, putting politics aside, to make the bill better. It is a good thing when the committee process works that way.

The bill should not be simply blocked because it is not absolutely perfect in the eyes of the official opposition.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is more important for Canadians to be informed of what is going on in the House than to be informed about how the debate happens. Everyone agrees that cluster munitions are horrible devices. We know that because 113 countries have signed the convention and 84 countries have ratified it.

Canadians would be interested in hearing that some provisions of the bill allow our armed forces to ask our allies in combat to use cluster munitions. There are a lot of little loopholes, so this bill will not permanently ban the use of cluster munitions. On the contrary, it will offer many more opportunities to use them or for our allies to use them in theatres of battle where we are working together.

• (1725)

[*English*]

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, Canada has never used these despicable weapons of mass destruction. There are some stockpiles of them which, according to this legislation, would be destroyed. The Chief of the Defence Staff has been very clear that he will issue an order to ensure that if there is a Canadian flying a plane on a mission under foreign government, that individual will not be allowed to use cluster munitions.

The member opposite said that everyone agrees. Everyone does not agree. Some of our closest friends and allies have not signed on to this.

An hon. member: They shouldn't be our friends.

Hon. John Baird: They are countries like the United States, Mr. Speaker. President Obama does not support this.

I visited Laos last year. There are some 80 million unexploded ordnances still in that country today. People are being killed every year in Vietnam because of these unexploded weapons. Children are losing their arms or legs, seniors are losing their life.

That is why, in addition to the amendment to the bill, we committed to come forward with additional projects to support countries in dealing with these horrific remnants of war. Long after the conflict ends, they continue to cause huge harm. I think we all agree with that.

I just do not want the Canadian who is working at a military base refuelling an American plane to be called before an international court because he or she did not check and confirm that there were no cluster munitions on board.

Cluster munitions should never have been used in Afghanistan by the Americans. Canada did not support the use of those cluster munitions. Nonetheless, some NATO countries do not support the bill. Let us try to convince them to do the right thing, to join us and ratify this important convention.

Government Orders

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the foreign affairs minister is always entertaining in his responses, but I know he realizes the importance of the legislation on which we are debating time allocation.

I have also heard him say that there is only one component of the bill on which we have a disagreement. Is he willing to remove clause 11 from the bill so we can proceed expeditiously with the legislation?

Hon. John Baird: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to put members of the Canadian Armed Forces at risk should they have some far away link to the use of these horrible weapons. The opposition has said that is not an issue, that it is not a problem and that we should not worry about it, but those of us in government have to worry about it. We have a responsibility to the men and women of the Canadian Armed Forces to ensure they are not put in harm's way in an international judicial proceeding.

We consulted with the Chief of the Defence Staff. We consulted with representatives of the Canadian Armed Forces to get their best advice, to find out their practical operations on the ground. They were clear that they had never used these weapons, and they never would.

We have to follow one aspect of the convention that was negotiated in the convention on interoperability so we do not put someone who is not using these evil weapons in harm's way.

With respect to clause 11, the member for Tobique—Mactaquac, along with the members for Ottawa Centre and Westmount—Ville-Marie, pushed hard to get the bill tightened up a little so it would be a bit more clear. We were happy to work with the opposition to strengthen the bill.

I understand there is not agreement, but part of a debate is having a vote. We cannot debate bills forever. An important part of the debate is getting up and having a vote.

● (1730)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: It is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith the question necessary to dispose of the motion now before the House.

Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Call in the members.

● (1805)

[*English*]

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

(*Division No. 212*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Bateman	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Falk
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goldring
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Holder
James	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Leef	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
Maguire	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	
Nicholson	Norlock
O'Connor	Oliver
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Paradis
Payne	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Valcourt
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Wong
Yelich	Young (Oakville)

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Young (Vancouver South)

Zimmer— 138

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Atamanenko	Aubin
Bélangier	Bennett
Benskin	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Boivin
Borg	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brousseau	Caron
Casey	Cash
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Christopherson
Cleary	Comartin
Côté	Crowder
Cullen	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre	Dubé
Dubourg	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Easter
Eyking	Freeland
Freeman	Garneau
Garrison	Genest
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Grouhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu	Hughes
Hyer	Jones
Julian	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	May
McCallum	McGuinity
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Murray	Nantel
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Pilon	Rafferty
Rankin	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sellah	Sgro
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
Sitsabaesan	Sullivan
Thibeault	Tremblay
Turmel	Valeriote— 106

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

● (1810)

[*Translation*]

REPORT STAGE

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-6. As we know, this is the Conservatives' bill to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

I will start by giving some background on this bill, and I will then talk about our position.

Cluster munitions are weapons that release hundreds of explosive devices over a wide area within a very short time. They have a

devastating effect on civilian populations that can last for years after a conflict ends.

I am going to present some facts and figures. To properly understand this issue, it is important to note that civilians suffer 98% of all injuries caused by cluster munitions. Cluster munitions are very small. They are often the size of a D battery or a tennis ball and they have a failure rate of 30%. Unexploded cluster munitions basically become anti-personnel mines. A single cluster bomb contains hundreds of bomblets and usually disperses them over an area the size of two or three football fields. Up to 37 countries and territories could be affected by the cluster munitions that were used during armed conflicts. Nineteen countries used cluster munitions during combat operations. A total of 34 countries produce cluster munitions, although half of them have now stopped producing these types of weapons, in some cases as a result of the convention. Canada has never used or produced cluster munitions, and our country should be thanked for that.

The worldwide stock of cluster munitions represents about 4 billion bombs, and one-quarter of that stock is held by the United States.

In 2006, 22 members of the Canadian Armed Forces were killed and 112 were injured in Afghanistan because of anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and other kinds of explosive weapons. Thousands of civilians have been injured or killed by these weapons, whose presence makes farming dangerous and impedes the reconstruction and development of vital infrastructure such as roads, railway lines and power plants.

It is often difficult and dangerous to remove unexploded cluster munitions after an armed conflict. Some countries have been dealing with this problem for decades.

Laos is the most cluster-bomb-contaminated country in the world, with tens of millions of unexploded cluster munitions.

Canada actively participated in the Oslo process to produce a convention to ban the use of cluster munitions. The Oslo process came on the heels of the successes of the Ottawa treaty to ban land mines.

A total of 113 countries signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions and 84 ratified it. Despite strong opposition from the majority of participating states and non-governmental organizations, Canada succeeded in negotiating into the final text of the convention an article that explicitly allows for continued military interoperability with non-party states, article 21.

Bill C-6 does not contain just this clause on military co-operation with non-signatory countries. The main problem lies in clause 11, which proposes a very vague list of exceptions. In its original form, clause 11 allowed Canadian soldiers to use, acquire, possess or transport cluster munitions during combined operations involving a state not party to the Convention, and to request the use of a cluster munitions by another state's armed forces.

At the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, the NDP backed Canadian and foreign civil organizations that called for the bill to be amended.

We worked closely, publicly and directly with the government.

Government Orders

•(1815)

We were able to convince the government to prohibit the use of cluster munitions by Canadian soldiers. Unfortunately, this bill still has serious flaws. If they are not addressed, Canada's commitment to the fight against cluster munitions will be shallow.

In fact, if Bill C-6 is not amended, it could have international implications for the Convention because the opt-outs and exceptions it contains could be invoked as precedents by other countries. The bill, in its current form, is the least restrictive of all bills passed by signatory states thus far. This is an embarrassing situation for Canada, which has always boasted about its humanitarian spirit. However, I am not surprised by the government's attitude, given its general attitude towards arms control.

I would like to remind members that this Conservative government refused to sign the UN Arms Trade Treaty, which was signed by every one of our NATO allies. It was also this government that relaxed restrictions on arms exports. That is shameful because under this government our international humanitarian reputation continues to be eroded. Instead of being a leader on the international scene, the Conservative government is only tarnishing Canada's reputation.

I would also like to explain the NDP's position on Bill C-6. To begin, the NDP fully supported a treaty banning cluster munitions. However, Bill C-6 undermines the convention instead of ensuring its implementation.

The Conservatives' bill to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions is widely recognized as being the weakest and worst bill in the world. It undermines the very spirit in which the convention was drafted. We are opposing the bill in its current form. My NDP colleagues who are part of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development worked hard with civil society groups to improve the bill. While the amendment that the Conservatives agreed to is an improvement, it is not enough for us to support the bill. At this stage, we are proposing that clause 11 be deleted in its entirety.

A number of stakeholders share our opinion and are also opposed to the Conservative government's Bill C-6. To begin, I would like to talk about Earl Turcotte, a former senior coordinator for mines action at DFAIT who was the head of the Canadian delegation to negotiate the convention. He stepped down in protest of the Conservative government's decision to introduce this very weak implementation bill. In a written statement intended for the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, he said that the Conservative government had betrayed the trust of the other countries that signed the convention when it included the controversial clause in Bill C-6. Mr. Turcotte is fighting for more binding legislation. He said:

The proposed legislation is the worst of any country that has ratified or acceded to the convention to date.

It fails to fulfill Canada's obligations under international humanitarian law; it fails to protect vulnerable civilians in war-ravaged countries around the world; it betrays the trust of sister states who negotiated this treaty in good faith, and it fails Canadians who expect far better from our nation.

Paul Hannon, the executive director of Mines Action Canada, is also opposed to the bill. He said:

Canada should have the best domestic legislation in the world. We need to make it clear that no Canadian will ever be involved with this weapon again, but from our reading this legislation falls well short of those standards.

•(1820)

Even the Canadian Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross, which almost never issue position statements on international laws, opposed this bill.

For all of these reasons, if the government is not prepared to amend this bill, we will oppose it. Other countries want to see us show some leadership on this bill.

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as part of going through the hearings on this bill in committee, it was very troubling when Walt Natynczyk talked about how soldiers would call in strikes on themselves in certain situations. We also heard from the folks in committee that sometimes international agreements like this then have to be drafted into criminal law that would apply here in Canada. They had a number of challenges in that regard, when it came to things like transfer.

We believe, as the government, that we have met the conditions for the implementation of this with the amendment that we made, explicitly taking out the use in proposed paragraph 11(1)(c). That is very important. There was also an agreement in committee to ensure that there would be an annual report. Ultimately, we want to get all countries to stop using these cluster munitions.

As a caution to the member, does he not think it is important to ensure that we continue interoperability with one of our biggest allies, the U.S., but at the same time that our criminal law has to reflect Canadian law, and sometimes there cannot be a direct translation from the international context?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, I and the NDP believe very strongly that it was not only proposed paragraph 11(1)(c) that had to be eliminated, but clause 11. We have to send a strong message as to the position of the Canadian government.

[*Translation*]

Former Australian prime minister Malcolm Fraser also spoke out on this issue. He said:

It is a pity the current Canadian government, in relation to cluster munitions, does not provide any real lead to the world. Its approach is timid, inadequate and regressive.

That is how other countries see us: a timid, inadequate and regressive country. It is up to us to make the laws in Canada. Clause 11 could have been struck. We will have to go to committee to see what the government is willing to do. If amendments are proposed, the government will have to accept them if it wants us to support this bill.

Government Orders

• (1825)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on the member's comments in regard to international leadership. At one time, Canada did play a very strong leadership role. I would reflect on a former member of Parliament, Lloyd Axworthy, and the Ottawa agreement, which dealt with the land mines. The member made reference to that particular agreement in his opening remarks.

I would ask that the member provide further comment in terms of lost opportunity by Canada not playing the type of leadership role that it could. A good example of that was the land mines treaty and the positive impact that has had in general.

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, I remember that I made a speech on cluster bombs at the time that Axworthy and the Liberals were here, but they did not go far enough.

Today we have another bill in front of us, and we believe strongly that clause 11 has to be removed. We have to show that leadership. It was a start at that time, but now we have to continue. It is totally unacceptable to have those cluster bombs in some countries, when 98% of times it is civilians who are killed from them, and our own soldiers, when they go on the line. Our own soldiers are being killed by them. It is not just that, but innocent civilians are getting hurt.

It is time for the leadership of our country, our government, to do the right thing, and it has that opportunity.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2006, 22 members of the Canadian Armed Forces were killed and 112 were injured in Afghanistan because of anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and other explosive weapons. These facts speak for themselves.

Can my colleague explain why the extreme danger posed by cluster munitions is grounds for the NDP's strong opposition to this bill?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, our soldiers have never used cluster munitions and will never use them.

Our soldiers encounter these when they go to war. Some lose their lives. Civilians also lose their lives. This is not unusual during times of war, when soldiers are fighting for their country, but 98% of cluster munitions casualties are civilians.

These kinds of bombs do not take out a single person or building. They affect everyone in the area, including children, and these people all become victims.

We will oppose this bill because it does not do enough. We cannot accept it. If we were to accept it we would be accomplices of the Conservatives and we will not be accomplices. This bill does not do enough to protect the world by requiring that cluster munitions be destroyed and removed forever and by requiring that we not use them.

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am not surprised that my colleague from Acadie—Bathurst shares my views. In my 10-minute speech, I will touch upon several very valid points that he mentioned, and I will to add some others.

Today we are debating Bill C-6 at report stage. This bill has a good chance of being passed by the Canadian Parliament, whether we like it or not. The Conservatives reminded us over and over in their speeches why they insist on moving forward. I concede that some amendments were adopted in committee—a sort of compromise—but the reality is that the amendments do not go far enough to reassure the members of the NDP.

I would recall the figure I mentioned to my colleague earlier. In 2006, 22 members of the Canadian Armed Forces were killed and another 112 wounded in Afghanistan by anti-personnel mines, cluster munitions and other explosive weapons. Those figures terrify me.

Even if we in Canada decide not to use cluster munitions, we may become accomplices of less scrupulous countries. Some countries are less democratic, and certain elites govern and make decisions there. It terrifies me that some leaders and countries are deciding to go ahead with cluster munitions, because they exact a real human cost. I do not want to politicize this debate at all.

I wonder what would happen if, in the House of Commons today, we could hear from the families of those who did not return from combat because they were killed in situations of conflict by anti-personnel mines. I say anti-personnel mines because defective cluster munitions, weapons that lie undetonated in the ground, become anti-personnel mines.

Several of my NDP colleagues will be speaking from the heart this evening and saying how this bill raises serious concerns for them. We obviously hope the Conservative government will be reasonable and will want to amend the bill further, but I unfortunately doubt that will be the case.

It is my democratic right to represent my constituents. As the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, I represent approximately 100,000 people. I would be lying if I said they had all contacted me in the past few days to give me their opinions. However, the people who elected me have the same social democratic values as I do.

My region, Saguenay-Lac-Saint-Jean, has one of the largest military bases in Canada, CFB Bagotville. It is home to 2 and 3 Wings, and it plays a very important strategic role in Canada. I am in favour of the Bagotville military base. I am in favour of the various missions that base carries out, both in our region and across our country. I am talking here about protecting our territory and providing assistance in exceptional situations.

I also agree that we should send Canadians, members of Canada's armed forces, to disarm the world, in fact to protect us from a greater evil, if I may put it that way. We are aware that there are many countries, factions, opinions and ideologies on earth. Some parts of the world are in constant conflict.

• (1830)

I hope the Canadian government does not forget its peacekeeping role going forward. I think that is the best thing we can offer to countries currently in conflict and to future generations of Canadians.

Government Orders

Going back to cluster munitions, these weapons release hundreds of explosives over a large area in a very short period of time. They have devastating effects on civilians that can last for many years after a conflict is over.

Canada played an active part in the Oslo process, which led to an agreement designed to ban the use of cluster munitions. The Oslo process was triggered in order to take advantage of the success of the Ottawa convention on the prohibition of anti-personnel mines. Unfortunately, the United States, China and Russia did not take part in the process and are still stockpiling cluster munitions. That is a major concern.

Despite strong opposition by most signatory states and non-governmental organizations, Canada managed to include an article in the final text of the convention that expressly permits ongoing military interoperability with states that are not signatories to the convention. Interoperability essentially enables people to do their jobs in a military context.

Bill C-6 is not limited to that article on interoperability. The main problem is in clause 11, which provides a list of very vague exceptions. In its original form, clause 11 would have allowed Canadian soldiers to obtain, possess, use and transport cluster munitions in joint operations with another country that was not a signatory to the convention and to request their use by the armed forces of another country.

However, in the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, the NDP offered its support to Canadian and foreign civilian organizations demanding that the bill be amended. We worked closely, publicly and directly with the government, and we managed to persuade it to expressly prohibit the use of cluster munitions by Canadian soldiers.

I find it surprising that we had to bring forward an amendment to the bill. It seems to me that this amendment should have been included in the original bill, although I am pleased the government worked with the NDP on this.

Unfortunately, this bill still has other flaws. If they are not corrected, Canada's implementation of its commitment to oppose cluster munitions will only be superficial. If Bill C-6 is not amended, it could even undermine the convention globally in that other countries would be able to invoke the withdrawal and exception options it contains as precedents. Believe me, we do not want that.

In its present form, the bill is less restrictive than all the laws passed to date by the countries that have ratified the convention. That is very disturbing.

The government has become somewhat timid, which does not surprise me when you consider its general reluctance to take action on arms control. For example, it refused to sign the UN Arms Trade Treaty, unlike all our NATO allies, and also relaxed arms export restrictions.

What we want is clear. The NDP fully supported a treaty to ban cluster munitions. We stand firm on that and are very proud of it. However, this bill undermines the convention instead of ensuring that it is implemented. We also oppose the bill in its present form. At the committee stage, we worked hard to improve it together with

groups from civil society. Even though the amendment approved by the Conservatives is an improvement, it is not enough for us to be able to support the bill.

In conclusion, I believe it would be best to delete clause 11 entirely. That is what we propose.

• (1835)

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his comments. I would just like to talk to him about clause 11, because one of the comments of the previous speaker was that he would actually remove that.

There is interoperability, which we have to maintain, but also as a government we have to make sure that we are protecting our troops from getting into situations they are not planning to get into. At the same time, we have to recognize that we have never used cluster munitions, nor will we ever.

I have a quick question for the member on interoperational planning. The U.S. has failed to sign on to this. Obama will not sign on to this. A concern from a planning standpoint, in bringing all these things together, is that if clause 11 were actually taken out of the bill, I would be concerned that this would prevent Canadians from being involved in some of these planning missions, because they would not dare take on the risk of that interoperability planning. Even though maybe the Royal Canadian Air Force would be involved as part of the mission and should be in the planning, it would not want to be, because it would be held on criminal charges if clause 11 were actually taken out of the bill. I would like his comment on that.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dany Morin: Mr. Speaker, I would be lying if I said I was a cluster munitions expert. That is why I would rely instead on the comments of the Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross, which stated that clause 11 would authorize activities that would undermine the purpose of the CCM and ultimately contribute to the continued use of cluster munitions instead of bringing about their elimination.

Thus, as we can see, experts in civil society, including those with the Canadian Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross, are very uncomfortable with clause 11.

• (1840)

Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech.

In his opinion, why does the NDP have to continue pressuring the Conservatives to amend this bill? Is it to ensure that Canada's humanitarian reputation is not tarnished by this weak bill?

Mr. Dany Morin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my New Democrat colleague for her excellent question. The reason the NDP is so insistent that clause 11 be removed is that we believe Canada must not be complicit in the handling and transportation of cluster munitions.

Government Orders

Sometimes cluster munitions do not explode and they become anti-personnel mines. A number of members of the Canadian Forces have been victims of them. To give an indication of the extent of the damage caused by cluster munitions, I need only note that 98% of all injuries associated with cluster munitions are suffered by civilians.

These cluster munitions are not exploding in Canada; they are exploding in countries where there are conflicts, and the civilian population should not be paying the price. All of the countries that have not ratified the convention, including the United States, should ratify it so that we can live in a better world where there are fewer lives lost.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, this is a really important bill, because it is Canada's opportunity to show the community of nations that we are committed still to our role in the world that we established through the Ottawa process to deal with land mines and that on cluster munitions, we are prepared to implement the treaty, not just with a fingers-crossed-behind-our-back commitment but fully and in the spirit and letter of the treaty.

I agree with everything my hon. colleague said. I would ask him whether he does not agree that we should have implemented treaty language in Bill C-6.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dany Morin: Mr. Speaker, my colleague's question is a good one.

When we make amendments to a bill, we must indeed put them in the right place and have the right definition for them. If we were talking about a specific amendment, I could answer my colleague's question in greater depth. However, she reminds us of the importance of the principle of the convention.

Canada has a strange relationship with the convention it has signed. Of the 113 countries that have signed the convention, only 84 have ratified it. Canada signed the convention on December 3, 2008, and the implementing legislation was introduced in the House of Commons on December 15, 2012. Even though the government has taken some action, it is deplorable for it to be trying get out of it with regard to clause 11.

[*English*]

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to speak on behalf of my constituents of Surrey North.

This is the 77th or 78th use of time allocation by the government. Time allocation basically shuts down debate. The Conservatives do not want debate to happen in this House.

On this side of the House, the NDP is fully prepared to debate this bill, but there are no Conservatives getting up to speak to this very important bill that concerns Canada's reputation around the world. Yet speaker after speaker, NDP members are willing to debate in this House that we can actually repair some of the damage that has been done to our reputation over the last seven years by the government.

Before I get to the bill, which is an act to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions, I must say that Canada had a great reputation around the world. We were viewed as peacemakers. We

were viewed as a country that brought countries together. There was an opportunity for us to do that with this particular bill.

As the member pointed out, the Conservatives should not bring a bill into the House while crossing their fingers behind their backs. The Conservatives seem to be doing that not only with this bill, but with many bills. The Conservatives have been slapped by the Supreme Court a number of times in the past couple of years when it comes to the bills they are bringing forward in this House, as to whether they are actually constitutional and whether they respect our charter.

The Conservatives have their fingers crossed behind their backs, hoping nobody will notice it, but the NDP will ensure that Canadians know that the Conservatives are missing an opportunity to present Canada to the world at the level we were many years ago when we were respected around the world.

In the 40 or 50 years that the elections have been held for the Security Council, Canada has always rotated and had a seat on the Security Council. However, under this government, it is the first time we do not have anybody sitting on the UN Security Council.

This was an opportunity to show the world that we are serious when it comes to these kinds of munitions, cluster explosives that are very dangerous when they are used around the world. We have seen pictures from many countries of the damage these explosives do not only at the time they are dropped, but many years later.

When it came to drafting this particular convention, Canada played a role in bringing some of the countries together. The process came on the heels of another success we had, which was the Ottawa treaty to ban land mines. This was an opportunity for us to again lead the world, but the Conservatives missed it.

Despite strong opposition from the majority of participating states and non-governmental organizations, Canada succeeded in negotiating into the final text of the convention an article that explicitly allows for a country to use military interoperability with non-party states. It's article 11.

Bill C-6 goes beyond the interoperability allowance in the convention. The main problem lies basically in clause 11, which establishes an extremely broad list of exceptions. That is where the trouble is.

In the original form of the bill, the clause permitted basically Canadian soldiers to use, acquire, possess, and/or transport cluster munitions whenever they are acting in conjunction with another country that is not a member of the convention, and to request the use of cluster munitions by another country.

● (1845)

At the foreign affairs committee, the NDP supported many Canadians, many experts and civil society groups in pushing for changes to the bill. We engaged closely. We like to work with the government when it comes to making legislation. That is the job of parliamentarians. When a bill gets to committee, we want to ensure that we work with the government to correct mistakes. We want to ensure that we correct mistakes not only in this particular legislation but in many other bills. We can work with the government and make this legislation better.

Government Orders

In many committees, not only does the NDP offer good ideas, but various professors, academics and experts in particular areas offer genuine, good advice to the government in order to improve legislation. A lot of times the government fails to consider that advice. In this case, we were able to persuade the government to formally prohibit the use of cluster munitions by Canadian soldiers. That is a minor improvement, but there is still an issue with clause 11.

This legislation contains many loopholes, and the government failed to close them. We, along with experts and civil society organizations, offered advice. We were all very vocal with respect to some of the changes that needed to be made, but again, the Conservatives failed to do that.

As it currently stands, Canada's legislation, Bill C-6, will be the weakest legislation of all the countries that have ratified the convention. Unfortunately the government, even though it is opposed to cluster munitions, fits into a broader pattern of weakness on arms control. The government has refused to join all NATO allies in signing the UN Arms Trade Treaty and has loosened restrictions on arms exports.

Canada had the opportunity to show the world that we are leaders when it comes to bringing peace to countries around the world. We had an opportunity here to lead worldwide, to show people that Canadians can provide peaceful societies around the world.

I will quote former Australian Prime Minister Malcolm Fraser, who said, "It is a pity that the current Canadian government", that is the Conservative government, "in relation to cluster munitions, does not provide any real lead to the world. Its approach is timid, inadequate and regressive."

The Conservatives seem to have myopic vision. They cannot see that they could provide leadership to the whole world. Countries around the world are looking for leadership from Canadians, and this was an opportunity for us to provide that leadership.

A number of countries have not signed on to this convention, but that does not mean we cannot work with some of the other countries. Eighty-four countries have passed bills in their legislatures. There are 113 signatories to the convention. That is a lot of countries. Working with these countries we could help persuade the countries that have not signed on. This is where Canada should be providing leadership. It has been expected for many decades, for over a hundred years, for Canada to take the lead, to bring other countries together in a peaceful manner, yet over the last number of years we have seen especially the present Conservative government fail to provide that leadership.

• (1850)

I urge the government to live up to the letter of the convention. I urge it to make the changes that we are proposing in order to improve this legislation so we can bring countries together and have a peaceful, prosperous munitions-free world.

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on a few things my colleague said about importing the language from the convention and do a little follow-up on the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands' comments.

From legal counsel the comment in committee was it is very difficult a lot times to use treaty language because the words mean very different things.

When we started, we started with the cluster munitions convention. In this particular case, we took the language of the convention as a starting point and then we had to look at how we would blend this into Canadian criminal court law.

As I said earlier, stockpiling became possession because, in fact, they said there is really no way without defining it what an offence of stockpiling would be. If we criminalize possession, then we have caught somebody who has one cluster munition or 10,000. It does not matter. It is a broader offence, so it is much more collective than the munitions treaty.

He also talked about transfers. What they had to do in the convention is more of a state to state, as opposed to in the criminal court.

While I respect his opinion, I differ. That is why the government is going forward with the legislation.

Does he not also understand that legally, we are required to pass laws in this place which are applicable in a criminal court in Canada? In this case, he must agree that the convention does not adequately address coverage in a criminal court.

• (1855)

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, I am not a lawyer, so I do not know the language that my hon. colleague is talking about. However, I will state what some of the experts are saying about this particular legislation. I can only take their word. These are not my words; these are the words of renowned experts in their fields.

Paul Hannon, executive director of Mines Action Canada, stated:

Canada should have the best domestic legislation in the world. We need to make it clear that no Canadian will ever be involved with this weapon again but from our reading this legislation falls well short of those standards.

Another expert, Mr. Earl Turcotte, former senior coordinator for Mine Action at DFAIT, stated:

In my view, the proposed Canadian legislation is the worst of any country that has ratified or acceded to the convention, to date.

It fails to fulfill Canada's obligations under international humanitarian law; it fails to protect vulnerable civilians in war-ravaged countries around the world; it betrays the trust of sister states who negotiated this treaty in good faith, and it fails Canadians who expect far better from our nation.

To me, this makes sense, rather than the legal language that my friend—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Questions and comments, the hon. member for Saint-Lambert.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to congratulate my colleague on his speech.

I would like to point out that Bill C-6, An Act to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions, has an enormous number of weaknesses. Today, in 2014, no one can really be unaware of all the damage and deaths caused by cluster munitions.

Government Orders

These days, it is children who are particularly the victims, and they will continue to be for years to come. It is therefore high time to take the necessary action to put an end to cluster munitions.

My colleague said that clause 11 presented a real problem in that it is contradictory. Could he pursue that line of thought further?

[English]

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, this convention was completed back in December 2008. It is a serious matter when we are talking about munitions. They are very dangerous. They last a long time, even after they are dropped. They cause serious damage to people who come in contact with these explosives.

The Conservatives have been sitting on this since 2008. They had the opportunity to bring this forward many years ago. We are now in 2014. It took them six years to address this issue which is very important around the world. They sat on their seats, basically.

Again, I urge the government to adopt the amendments we are offering to improve the bill and to show leadership around the world.

● (1900)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first, let me congratulate my colleague from Surrey North on his very thoughtful speech on this important legislation.

Once again, let me reiterate that time allocation has been imposed for the 73rd time, this time on a bill that I think everyone in this room would agree is critical. This is not something to make light of, this is not comic relief. This bill deals with the very serious issue of cluster bombs.

I want to remind all members that when we look at this, Canadian soldiers have been victims of cluster bombs. In 2006, 22 Canadian Forces members were killed and 112 wounded in Afghanistan as a result of land mines, cluster bombs, and other explosive devices. It is important that when we deal with this legislation, we get this right. The expediency of pushing things through and not addressing all the issues that have been raised by both experts, our international partners and by the opposition should not be made light of in this context.

We all know that cluster munitions can release hundreds of explosives over a large area in a very short time. We also know that it is civilians who end up being the victims after the conflict has ended.

We took part in the Oslo process to produce a convention to ban the use of cluster munitions. That came on the heels of the successes of the Ottawa treaty on banning land mines. I still remember when that happened. I was in my classroom going over this with my students. I remember how critical it was. Some of us worked on that for years. When I look at the legislation, I think of it as critical legislation that goes hand-in-hand with land mines and the government is trying to water it down by building more exceptions into it.

I understand some countries have not signed it, such as the U.S., China and Russia. They have stockpiles, and we have no control over that. What we do have control over is how we put a treaty into operation, a convention that we have signed with many other countries. That is the critical issue today.

I hear a lot from my colleagues across the way that we need to learn to compromise, that we should not continue to debate things, rather we should vote to expedite everything through the House. My appeal to my colleagues across the way is that they listen to some of the input from the experts and the specialists, pay attention to what we have signed, and work with us to make it the kind of legislation that we pass through the House by unanimous consent. We should work toward that.

Clause 11 is unnecessary. If it is addressed, then I believe we could expedite this whole process and we would have agreement. Imagine what that would feel like. For that matter, how would I know what that feels like? Ever since I have been in Parliament, all I have seen are time allocations and bullying type tactics to limit debate and push legislation through at a very fast pace. It is at this time we wonder what do we have to gain by doing this. However, it points to an ideology, an ideology that is a plague.

● (1905)

I am beginning to question the government's commitment to this convention, which was signed by Canada. If the Conservatives were really committed to it, why would they be watering it down right now?

When it comes to international conventions and implementing them, it is really important to keep the language clear and not have too many grey areas, because those grey areas give escape hatches to all kinds of people. There are 113 countries that have signed the convention and 84 have ratified it. How many years has it taken us? We signed it in 2008 and we are now in 2014.

By the way, the Conservatives first tabled this in the House of Commons in December 2012. When did they decide to bring it back into the House? A couple of days before the summer recess. That is the importance they put on critical legislation. Then they use these very obtuse arguments and say that it is urgent, that we need to get it done quickly, and so we now have time allocation. I have been elected to come to the House to debate issues.

I find it interesting that ever since time allocation was moved, I have not heard any speakers outside of the NDP, which makes a mockery of parliamentary debate. Not only do the Conservatives limit the amount of time, but they sit there and refuse to participate by putting their perspective forward and giving us the opportunity to be persuaded by their brilliant answers to the questions we may ask. I am always open to be persuaded in debate. That is what good debate does. However, that can only happen when all parties take that debate seriously.

When I stand to speak in the House, I stand not only to represent my constituents, but as a Canadian. As a member of Parliament whose government signed a convention, which we are now looking to implement, I am embarrassed by the weakening of it.

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Over the last number of years, many of my constituents have come to me and said that they are really getting worried and concerned about how we are perceived internationally.

Let us go to a topic that is very close and dear to my heart, which is the living conditions for some of our aboriginal people. When the rapporteur reported, all my colleagues across the way could do was to vilify instead of acknowledging that we had some serious issues that we all needed to work together to address.

When it comes to labour issues, colleagues across the way, again, have no difficulty in contravening our ILO conventions. When it comes to environmental protection, we seem to look the way and stretch the elastic as far as we can. This is a major concern. However, this is on cluster munitions.

I am very fortunate, as are many of us, that I have not experienced war in my lifetime. I have talked to many veterans and they have horrendous stories to tell from past and current experiences. I think if we were to get them into a room, they would say absolutely no to cluster bombs. We should not be weakening our conventions.

I have so much more to say, because there is such brilliant expert testimony on this to support what I have said, but my time is up. However, I would urge my colleagues to delete clause 11 and I will stand with them to support this legislation.

• (1910)

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there were a couple of things during the committee process. The minister was there. To her point with respect to these cluster munitions and how horrific these things are, the minister brought a few examples to committee. They were not real examples, thank goodness, but models. We started to understand why there were many challenges where these were used in the past. Young children pick them up thinking they are toys. Hence, that is why a lot of countries are not using them, including Canada. Unfortunately, even though I do not think the U.S. has used them for quite some time, it still has not chosen to sign on as a signatory.

I want to ask the member the question I have asked before. We are trying to put this legislation into our Criminal Code and we just cannot accept that convention. It just does not work. Our legal people have told us that. I am an accountant, not a lawyer, but they said that we cannot put those UN conventions into our Criminal Code. Is that not important also as part of the reflection of this? It is not going to be a perfect alignment and that is why we need the protections, because the people we work with as part of our joint operations are not signatories, so we need to protect our Canadian soldiers as well.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's very calm and thoughtful question. It is always nice to get thoughtful questions from the other side that are well explained.

Removing clause 11 will not put this legislation into any kind of jeopardy. Right now there is an article in the convention that explicitly allows for continued military interoperability with non-party states. Therefore, we have that already, and if we import that wording into the bill, it is there. However, clause 11 goes much further. It actually broadens the criteria for exceptions.

I do not want my colleague across the way to take my word for it. Earl Turcotte, former senior coordinator for Mine Action at DFAIT, was the head of the Canadian delegation to negotiate the convention, and this is what he had to say. He stated:

The proposed legislation is the worst of any country that has ratified or acceded to the Convention on Cluster Munitions to date....

It fails to fulfill Canada's obligations under international humanitarian law; it fails to protect vulnerable civilians in war-ravaged countries around the world; it betrays the trust of sister states who negotiated this treaty in good faith, and it fails Canadians who expect far better from our nation.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member that this is not the first time I have had the opportunity to speak. Quite often when I speak, I speak on behalf of the Liberals, so the Liberals are engaged whether it is at second reading or the bill's current status.

There are endless horror stories involving a wide range of all types of demographics, from young children to adults to members of the forces. There are many horror stories regarding cluster munitions. Earlier this afternoon, I made reference to the fact that Canada could and should play a stronger leadership role on issues of this nature. I cited what one of her colleagues made reference to earlier in his speech, which was the role that Lloyd Axworthy played with regard to land mines.

To what degree does my colleague believe Canada should be lobbying or taking any sort of role with regard to the United States and its position? What would she like to see Canada do with regard to the United States and its position on this issue?

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: First, Mr. Speaker, with regard to our friends and other states that are not signatories to this treaty, it is our job to work with them and use our influence on our buddies to persuade them to do the right thing. That is the kind of leadership role Canada has always played. Canada has been a consensus builder. I can remember being a young person in Europe and asking Americans why they were wearing Canadian flags. Do members know what they said? They said that it was because they felt more loved, and safer as well.

It is very easy for Canada to water down a convention it has signed because the Conservatives have a majority, but I will read a quote by an international committee of the Canadian Red Cross. This is what it had to say:

—clause 11...could permit activities that undermine the object and purpose of the convention and ultimately contribute to the continued use of cluster munitions rather than bringing about their elimination.

It stated that if clause 11 was deleted, the bill would have its support.

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•(1915)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, perhaps some people who are watching do not know what this is about. These are bombs the size of a household water heater that may contain as many as 2,000 small explosive capsules. The bomb is set to explode just before it touches the ground, and its effect is spread over a 100-metre radius. This weapon was invented to kill civilians. In a real combat theatre, it is useless, because soldiers are protected since they are in bunkers or armoured vehicles. This is a genocidal weapon.

When you get to that point, it is because there is a moral problem. We have to ask whether, by accommodating allies who use these weapons, we are not simply becoming accomplices. All of the little provisions in this bill to accommodate the users of these monstrosities mean that we share the blame with murderous countries like Russia and, in certain situations, the United States and China.

All of the countries that refuse to sign want to reserve the right to use them. There is absolutely no justification for using weapons of this kind. Starving children find pretty little coloured canisters and think they contain food. They try to open them and they are disfigured or killed.

The only way to protect our soldiers from being accused of something because these weapons were used is not to engage with allies who use them. We must place conditions on our engagement. I think we are no longer in that position, because we have virtually no diplomatic presence left. We have lost much of our lustre.

The first few times I went to Europe, a lot of Europeans told me what an example our country set and how much Canada had done for peace, in humanitarian terms. Canada is admired for helping to put an end to apartheid.

Every time we make compromises in situations like this, our popularity rating goes down, and we get nowhere. All the legal loopholes are dangerous and pointless, in addition to undermining the spirit of the treaty. If we had some dignity and some leadership, we would be ensuring that Canada's humanitarian reputation is not tarnished by actions like these.

We have to have some dignity and a right to criticize regimes that violate human rights. These days, for example, the Syrian army is dropping fuel barrels packed with explosives and shrapnel on civilians. That bears a strange resemblance to a cluster bomb, since civilians die when they explode. If we want to be in a position to criticize actions like those, we have to set an example and we have to demonstrate leadership. If we continue in this way, then instead of sewing Canadian flags on their backpacks, the Americans are going to be sewing Norwegian flags.

•(1920)

It is all very well to want to protect our troops from prosecution, but that should not prevent us from asking ourselves moral questions about the legitimacy of using weapons of this kind. If we accommodate those who use them, we become their accomplices and we must then bear that shame.

It would be very simple to remove clause 11. I prefer to deal with the difficulty of finding legal language rather than deal with the moral difficulty of indirectly endorsing the use of this kind of weapon.

It is important that Canadians know that the reason we want to debate this is that we have some very serious questions and we want them to know what the government is dragging them into. As soon as the bill has been passed and this is ratified, critical international voices are going to discover that we have the weakest law of all the signatory countries. We are going to make a reputation for ourselves like the one we had with the Arms Trade Treaty and in all the other situations where we have a weak position and make compromises without assessing the consequences.

I am not a moralizer, but I think that ultimately, we reach a point where we really have to look at our decisions head-on and see whether we are not on the wrong track and violating all our principles and the principles of the Canadians we represent.

[*English*]

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I caught the last couple of minutes of my colleague's input. I would like to ask him one simple question. It would be easy to be idealistic if we did not have to face the reality of the world that we live in.

Other than between 1812-15, pretty much every military engagement that we have entered into, we have entered into with the United States of America as an ally for all of the reasons that we understand. Is the member suggesting that if the U.S. continues to have cluster munitions in its inventory, because it has to face some realities that we do not have to face, we never, ever operate in any military operation with the United States of America?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc-André Morin: Mr. Speaker, I think Canada is a big country with a well-equipped army. We play an important role. Our allies, like the Americans, need our involvement. We should still set our conditions. Although I see my colleague laughing on the other side, I would say we should be able to impose certain conditions to secure our presence, unless we are so insignificant that we have absolutely nothing to say and nothing to decide. That would be rather a shame.

•(1925)

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, along the same lines, I would like my colleague to explain why Canada often hesitates to make decisions regarding humanitarian causes. Canada has a long history of peacekeeping missions and particularly leadership when it comes to cluster munitions and land mines. Why ruin that by keeping clause 11, which would cause Canadian soldiers to be involved in the use of these weapons against the wishes of most Canadians from coast to coast to coast?

Mr. Marc-André Morin: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to use the word that starts with “hyp” because apparently that is not parliamentary.

Government Orders

In my opinion, someone is crossing his fingers behind his back when he is talking, unless those who are better informed than we are have a hidden agenda or have discussed the matter with people who are more influential than us. That is really appalling. We should have more of a say in the investments that the government makes in our army, and we should have a say when the government does business with our allies.

[*English*]

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, I do have to follow up on the last question and the comment.

In fact, the legislation says exactly the opposite of what was suggested. “We will not use; we do not possess; we are destroying what we have; we will not use, ever, cluster munitions.” That is part of the legislation.

Going back to the comments and response to my previous question, yes, we are small. We are not insignificant, but we are very small when it comes to our power versus the United States versus the Brits versus allies in general. We will never do an operation of that importance by ourselves. We are just not that powerful. We will always be operating with allies. Most importantly, and pretty much always, we will always be operating with the Americans.

I would like to ask my colleague, again, given the inevitability of the fact that we will be operating with the Americans, given the fact that we will never use or possess cluster munitions, is the member suggesting that because of that we should refuse to operate with the Americans?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc-André Morin: Mr. Speaker, in times of war, such as the war in Afghanistan, we should be able to tell our allies that we do not want these types of weapons on the battlefield because they will kill our soldiers and they will continue to kill civilians for years afterward.

In any case, we should at least have the courage to speak out against the use of these weapons.

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I consider it a privilege to stand in the House to join my colleagues in debating the bill. I am deeply troubled that the government moved to limit debate on the bill. I am deeply troubled that apart from some questions which have been useful, I am not seeing colleagues in the Conservative Party rising to speak to this. If it is so wise to blow a cannon-ball through this treaty, then those members should stand and defend why they should do that.

Bill C-6 allegedly is an act to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions, but absent the amendments that my colleague from Ottawa Centre has brought forward, it will not be a bill to ban the use of cluster munitions. I will speak to that.

As my colleagues have spoken to, in order for Canada to ratify an international convention, the government of the day must table a bill in the House to enact legislation which brings into force in this country the terms of the treaty. As has been mentioned, Canada actually signed this treaty in 2008, and has waited until now to bring a final conclusion to the legislation that it has brought forward.

It is regrettable that our country, unlike Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and most of the European nations, has chosen not to take the treaty and enact it in legislation. Conservatives have taken this treaty and they have blown a cannon-ball through it. Canada has made a choice. Canada has signed the treaty, and it could choose not to ratify the treaty.

We heard questions today asking about our allies. The only ally that Conservatives have talked about is the United States. The whole point of the treaty was to deter nations from continuing to produce and use cluster munitions. What possible excuse can there be, if we only want to sort of ratify the treaty because we like to hang out with countries that do not respect the treaty? I do not think that is much of an incentive, to those who have not yet signed or ratified, to do the proper thing.

What is the significance of the treaty? What are cluster bombs? We have talked a lot about that tonight. These are explosive weapons that release many smaller submunitions. What is particularly dangerous about these—as if they do not cause enough damage and harm and maiming of families and children in the course of a war—is that, like land mines, many are left behind unexploded. Apparently they are very brightly coloured. They are very attractive to children, and a lot of children become maimed.

There has been a lot of talk in the House of late about how much we care about the plight of families suffering through this debacle in Syria. Let me share what has gone on in Syria with cluster bombs. The Syrian army, in Aleppo, has been issuing cluster bombs. What has happened is that a little boy of seven, shaking like a leaf, is seen moaning, with lacerations to his abdomen and legs. Three-year-old brother Nizar's body was ready for burial. Six-year old Mustafa Ali was lying in a bed with shrapnel injuries to his head, neck, and shoulders. There was a nine-year-old boy, with a nasty shrapnel injury to his left leg. These stories go on and on. This is what these weapons do. They are reprehensible.

To the credit of the nations around the world, at one time also including our nation, in 2008, they agreed to come together and draft and implement a convention through a treaty to ban the use of these reprehensible weapons.

Who supports its ratification in whole? The Secretary General of the United Nations supports it. He has expressed increasing concern about the humanitarian impact of explosive weapons, particularly when used in densely populated areas. The International Committee of the Red Cross has spoken out with great concern regarding the proposed legislation by the Canadian government to provide this major exemption. There are others: the British Action on Armed Violence, the International Network on Explosive Weapons, and Amnesty International.

● (1930)

Who has opposed the cluster bombs treaty? Well, it is the nations who have been producing or stockpiling significant quantities of cluster munitions. Those are the ones who are opposed to the convention and have not stepped forward either to sign or ratify it, and they include China, Russia, and the United States, reprehensibly.

Government Orders

In response to the remonstrations by the U.S., Canada and this group of nations have brought forward this treaty. However, now, Canada is introducing a loophole. A number of the parties that I have mentioned are concerned about Canada's move. They are suggesting that this move by Canada to include clause 11 may end up dismantling the effect of this treaty.

Who has criticized Bill C-6?

My colleagues have mentioned the former prime minister of Australia, Malcolm Fraser, and I will read what he has to say:

In a rare public attack, the former prime minister has lashed out at Canada for what he says is "a lack of commitment to an international treaty to ban deadly cluster munitions." He has accused the current government of departing from Canada's traditional international leadership, and said, "Canada used to be in the forefront internationally in leading the world in good directions". He then said that Canada cannot claim to have banned cluster bombs when it proposes to allow its military to help others to use the weapons.

That is a good point.

A second party who has spoken very strongly against Bill C-6 is one who should be very worrisome to Canadians, and that is Earl Turcotte.

Who is Earl Turcotte? He was the senior coordinator for the Conservative government's Department of Foreign Affairs in negotiating the treaty. He led the Canadian delegation in negotiations on the convention. He resigned, given the Conservative government's position on this section, which essentially blows a cannonball through the convention.

I do not think I have time to mention all that Mr. Turcotte has said, but I can assure members that he has been very strong in his admonitions. He said, "...the proposed Canadian legislation is the worst of any country that has ratified or acceded to the convention..." He has called for the bill to be strengthened. He said that, "The innocent victims of cluster munitions deserve nothing less." I tend to agree.

The Red Cross has said clearly that if clause 11 stands in the bill at passage, it could have the effect of undermining the entire treaty. The Government of Norway has also very strongly spoken against the bill.

Concerns have been expressed that unless clause 11, this wide exemption, is removed from Bill C-6, it could put Canadian Forces at risk, yet when we read the details of the bill, it is very hard to argue that.

I look forward to one of those members standing in this place tonight and giving us their argument on why this provision is needed in the treaty. No other nation who has ratified the convention has included this provision. Canada did not argue for this provision to be in the treaty. It is highly unusual for a nation that has signed and shown intent to ratify, to add a provision that would essentially undermine the treaty itself.

The treaty already allows for interoperability, so why do we need this additional provision? Surely it should be the obligation of our

country, when we get into the fields of war, to look very closely at what our partners in those activities are doing.

What could be an appropriate action by Canada? Well, it would be the same as all of the others who have ratified this convention, which is to stand up and say that one shall not use cluster munitions.

The case that Canadian Forces could be at risk simply by the fact that they go into the field of war with a country such as the United States that still has a stockpile of the munitions, I do not believe is a sound argument. I have yet to see that argument.

If we are in the field of war with a country and it is using those cluster bombs, then shame on us. We should not be participating in that activity. We have signed on to this treaty, and we are professing that we are going to ratify it, which is supposed to do away with the use of these cluster bombs.

● (1935)

I fully support the NDP amendments, which would strike clause 11. That would then bring Canada in line with all of the other reputable nations of the world that have signed and ratified the treaty.

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague from Edmonton—Strathcona with interest. She is right. We do hang out with the Americans a lot, for all kinds of historical and practical reasons. We hung out with them from 1916 to 1918, from 1941 to 1945, 1950 to 1953, 1991 to 1999, 2002 to 2014, and 2011. I suspect that we will hang out with them again tomorrow somewhere.

We provide a lot of capability, as was mentioned previously, but we do not provide anywhere near the numbers that the Americans provide, of course.

My colleague talked about putting Canadians at risk. She was looking for an example, and I will relay one that I believe I used the last time we addressed this issue. That is the example of a white schoolhouse in Panjwahi, where Canadians were pinned down and were calling for air support. They had no idea where the air support was coming from. In fact, it came from the Americans. It could have come from the British or from the Dutch. It could have come from a lot of people.

They were not going to sit there on the ground and worry about what that F-16 or A-10 was carrying. They were worried about saving their butts because they were getting the stuff beaten out of them by the Taliban. They would not sit there, high and mighty, and say they did not want help from the F-16s or the A-10s because they might be carrying cluster munitions. They did not, but they might have, because the U.S. had not ratified the treaty.

The member is looking for examples of where we have put Canadians at risk by following what the NDP is proposing. I would suggest that this is just one example, and it is a real world example. It actually happened, and it is one of many examples.

● (1940)

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I am reading clause 11, and I am having a very difficult time following the argument that the hon. member has raised. I know that he spent a good time in the military, and we highly respect the contribution that he made to the country.

Government Orders

However, we have to remember what clause 11 says. It would exempt our forces or officers from liability for directing or authorizing an activity using, possessing, importing, or exporting cluster munitions. By simply being in the field when people are at risk and another nation is coming in to assist them, I do not see where we have directed or authorized the use of cluster munitions. If we had, that is the whole point of the treaty, to prohibit actions expressly authorizing or requesting the use of cluster munitions.

That is completely contrary to clause 6, which says that we are prohibited from expressly requesting the use of cluster munitions, or acquiring or possessing cluster munitions. Clauses 6 and 11 just cannot be read together. It is a pointless exercise. We may as well not be ratifying the treaty, if we go ahead with the bill as tabled.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives in the House tonight have been asking about the U.S. and whether we are going to ignore them if they need our help. They are forgetting to mention that we are also aligning ourselves with China, a very Communist country, and Russia, a former Communist country, which is very undemocratic. The proof there is in Ukraine.

There are 113 countries that have signed on to this convention, and 84 that have ratified it. If these countries need our help because they have ratified this agreement, are we going to refuse to help them?

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Nickel Belt. I always appreciate his contributions in this place.

There is something even more important than what we do about the bad states around the world that are not joining the rest of the states that want to move toward a better world. My recollection is that when we were in Afghanistan, we were also partnering with countries such as the U.K. We were partnering with a lot of European nations. Why do we keep singling out one nation, the United States? The rest of the world is trying to get the United States and all of the other rogue nations to stop using cluster bombs.

It may be time for Canada to stand up and say we are going to take our forces to war to defend another nations and bring them democracy; however, when we join with them, we will not be using cluster bombs. To me, it is that simple.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise this evening to speak to Bill C-6, An Act to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions. I am always pleased to speak about foreign affairs issues.

As federal legislators, we often deal with issues that do not always have a direct impact on our constituents. Like many of my colleagues, I am sure, I have the honour of representing a riding where people are very concerned about what is happening with regard to different issues and the way Canada works on the international stage. Even though these issues do not affect them directly, the reputation that Canada has and the way we work are still very important to them. That is the main reason why I am rising today.

I have been listening to this evening's debate, and one of the arguments the Conservative government is using is that it cannot

guarantee that the Americans will not use cluster munitions given that they have not signed on to this convention. That is not the issue. To say that we could never stop them—and that there is therefore no problem having a bill ratify a convention, even if the bill is full of flaws that will undermine that same convention—is to miss the point.

The point is to show leadership on the world stage. That is, or I should say was—past tense—Canada's reputation on the world stage. Unfortunately, that is a problem with the Conservative government. We are hearing that again in the arguments this evening. They are saying that it is idealistic and there is nothing they can do about it. That is an excuse for not seeing things through and having a more complete bill that would be supported by the various stakeholders we heard in committee.

There is a term for that in international relations. It is called the tragedy of the commons. The example often used to illustrate the tragedy of the commons in international relations is the environment. If we look at environmental issues, when the different players negotiate on the world stage, they often say that they do not want to make efforts to reduce greenhouse gases because developing countries such as China, for example, will not adhere to the same restrictions that we do and this will put us at a competitive disadvantage. At the end of the day, if we always fall back on those arguments, then that is the tragedy of the commons. In other words, no one does anything.

That is precisely the problem with this bill and with the Conservative government's arguments. The United States is a big and powerful country and we are allies. No one is saying that we will stop working with the U.S. when the government ratifies the convention and working sometimes with the U.S. in military interventions. That being said, that does not stop us from seeing things through and truly supporting what is in the convention with a more complete bill.

I will elaborate a bit for those who may not have followed the entire debate. We are talking about the famous clause 11, which has come up often in the debate. A number of my colleagues have talked about it. Clause 11 would allow Canadian soldiers to use these munitions even though we signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions. If our soldiers were on a mission with countries that have not ratified the convention, we would refer to the concept of interoperability.

It was at Canada's insistence that this concept was included in the convention despite opposition from several countries that participated in the negotiations. This concept is a little strange and very contradictory. One of my colleagues talked about contradiction earlier. This is an extremely important term. In principle, Canada sits around a table and says that it agrees with principles and that it wants to ratify a convention. Then the government comes back to the House of Commons with a bill that puts all this in place and makes our laws conform to the undertakings of this international agreement. However, we cannot really support these principles.

Government Orders

● (1945)

If we took this matter seriously, the bill would instead state that if we were to participate in a military mission with allies such as the Americans, who continue to use these weapons, the Americans could do whatever they wanted, but we would prohibit the use of these weapons by Canadian soldiers. In that way, we would fully honour the principles set out in this convention.

Unfortunately, that is not what this bill proposes, and that is what we are speaking out against. The members opposite do not seem to understand that.

For example, I have listened to my colleague from Ottawa Centre ask the Minister of Foreign Affairs many questions about the Arms Trade Treaty, among other things. The minister talks about not wanting to punish so-called law-abiding citizens, as though we were debating the long gun registry when we are talking about an international treaty. It is really interesting, because we realize that the government's commitment to our obligations is dwindling, and this bill is an unfortunate example of that.

I listened to the hon. member for Newton—North Delta talk about a time when Americans felt safe and comfortable when they put a Canadian flag on their backpack and travelled in certain regions and countries because of the respect the international community had for Canada. I found that interesting.

All is not lost, but I dare say we can do better. That is what we are asking of the government today, as we did in committee. This afternoon the minister repeatedly said that an amendment had been accepted; however, the basic issue has not been corrected. That is why we cannot support this bill.

That is very disappointing because Canada built a reputation for itself through hard work and compromise, and that reputation brought together various countries that were not always on the same wavelength. Now, instead of continuing with that same work, Canada is taking a very strong stand. That is important, but the problem is that Canada is not standing firm on the right things. We need to take a firm stand by showing leadership and initiative, not by being closed-minded.

In other words, the Conservatives show up in the House, raise their hands and say this is too idealistic. I heard the hon. member for Edmonton Centre say that it is like *Alice in Wonderland*. For many Canadians—in fact, the vast majority—showing leadership on the international stage is not idealistic; it is part of our Canadian identity.

Showing leadership means leading by example. Sometimes, that means making difficult decisions and working with allies who do not work the way we do. It also means, as my colleague said, that we may sometimes have to put some of our soldiers in a difficult position, knowing that their American counterparts are using weapons we prohibit.

However, I think that the people we represent, the international community and our military personnel would be very proud to see us take a firm stand and deliver on the commitments made during negotiations with other countries.

To bring this full circle, I would like to come back to the idea of the tragedy of the commons, or waiting for others to act, which

unfortunately is far too often the case on the international stage. Countries are often too afraid to be at the forefront, making difficult decisions and what could be seen as forward-thinking commitments. That is not how Canada acted in the past, and that is not how it should be acting today.

We hope that the government will come to its senses as a result of the speeches that have been made today. When we debated this bill after it was introduced, the media and stakeholders like the Red Cross raised the same concerns as the NDP.

● (1950)

It has to be serious, because the Red Cross generally stays out of this kind of political debate. That speaks volumes.

I know that my time is up, but I think that I got our idea across. I hope that this will enlighten some government members.

[*English*]

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are having too much fun here tonight, in a manner.

This is not about backpacking around Europe with a flag on one's back. I think the people we represent would not be very proud if we allowed Canadian soldiers to die on the battlefield because we refused help from an ally because we did not like something they were doing. I know how my constituents would feel about that and how the people I know in uniform would feel about that.

I want to take my colleague up on something he said. Maybe I misunderstood, but it seems to me that he was suggesting that somehow the way Bill C-6 is written is permitting Canadians to use cluster munitions. Of course, it is exactly the opposite. We do not use, possess, store, or permit the use by Canadian Forces of cluster munitions ever, anywhere, any time. I would like him to clarify that. I hope he did not suggest that. If he did, I would ask him to clarify that, because it is simply not the case.

● (1955)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his question. As one of my colleagues just pointed out, the amendment fixed the problem and prevents the use of cluster munitions.

In the original version of the bill, cluster munitions were allowed during joint operations with countries that had not ratified the convention. The error was fixed and I acknowledge that. I misspoke. I was going back in time. I had the chance to speak to this bill at the beginning of the debate a few months ago.

That said, I would like to answer my colleague's question about endangering Canadian soldiers. That is not at all the case. It is important to note that what we want is to set an example by fixing the flaws in this bill to show that Canada does not accept this. We are not telling other countries what they should do. We are simply trying to show them the right thing to do. Setting an example in the world does not put anyone in danger.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, NDP): Mr. Speaker, being ex-military myself, there is a concept I have some difficulty understanding in the government's position, which is basically about cluster munitions being a dirty war. We have a tendency to go toward something that is clean, that is based on intel and drones, to make things clean and make sure that there are no civilian victims. We do not want wars. We want peace. Yet here we are making a loophole so that when we go into a country and intervene, we leave crap behind that kills civilians and children.

I do not understand the attitude of saying that we want to defend our troops. There are about a million tools we could use. The tendency is that when we go into someone's backyard, we try to leave in peace, where people are in harmony and believe in a future of peace. It is not where children are running around and being blown up because we were cowards with no backbone and left something behind.

[Translation]

Could my colleague tell us why clause 11 is unacceptable?

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Speaker, I appreciated the start of my colleague's comment and his question.

I did not have a chance to raise that point since I was mainly talking about international negotiations. When we think about these weapons in detail and the fact that they are left in people's yards, we realize that some very dangerous weapons have been left behind.

Earlier this evening, one of my colleagues cited the example of a young child running in the street who might think he has found a trinket that he can pick up as one would pick up a rock or a branch. Since it is a very dangerous weapon, it could cause a problem. My colleague also mentioned the bill's flaws. That goes back to the comments I made to the effect that we have a responsibility. When we start negotiations, we have a reason. This type of weapon no longer has any place in international society.

Whether in or outside Canada, it is important that we go all the way when we make a commitment to solve a problem, regardless of what some of our allies may decide.

● (2000)

Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will begin with a comment. I find it unfortunate that a guillotine has been imposed to limit the time we have to speak to this bill. Is it because they do not want to work with us or for us to ask them questions? I find that truly regrettable. Who do people currently see discussing this bill on CPAC? The NDP. The other parties ask us questions.

I think it is important today to discuss the risks to which Canada is exposing its military personnel and millions of civilians around the world by passing Bill C-6, An Act to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Although this bill is supposed to support an international effort to get rid of an atrocious weapon, the bill that has been put before us could do precisely the opposite.

I will therefore speak to what the bill does, what it does not do and the consequences it would have. I am putting myself in the shoes of

the people in the countries that receive these bombs that kill children or injure them for life. This is really disastrous.

Speaking of consequences, what happens when a cluster bomb explodes?

In Canada, we are lucky to live in peace, but we must not believe that we will never go through war. Other democracies before us have been through war. Just imagine for a moment what civilians go through during conflicts, which, by the way, rarely serve their interests.

As my colleagues said earlier, a bomb, not unlike the leaflet propaganda bombs that were used in days gone by, is dropped. However, instead of paper, hundreds of bomblets or submunitions no bigger than a D battery spread out over a more or less accurate target such as a landing strip or an armoured vehicle. It is said that cluster munitions are cheaper because they cover more territory in less time. In time, people are injured and die. There is therefore no need to send more. After the initial wave of explosions, roughly 30% of the unexploded submunitions remain and become de facto land mines that are still effective decades later. Think about this: when these bombs are dropped on a country, the child that might end up playing with them is not even born yet. He will be disabled for life. Civilians account for 98% of victims of cluster munitions. Half of them are children who mistake the colourful submunitions for a toy.

Would we want our children to mistake a bomblet for a toy? That is why I think we can never predict exactly what will happen once a cluster munition is dropped. All we know is that they tear flesh, break hearts and destroy communities with sadness.

I am taking the time to remind everyone what these weapons do because the Conservative government does not seem to understand. Officially, judging by its name, the bill should enable the implementation of the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Let us take a look at what this bill does and what it does not do.

According to the text of the convention signed by Canada on December 3, 2008, in Oslo:

1. Each State Party undertakes never under any circumstances:

- a) To use anti-personnel mines;
- b) To develop, produce, otherwise acquire, stockpile, retain or transfer to anyone, directly or indirectly, anti-personnel mines;
- c) To assist, encourage or induce, in any way, anyone to engage in any activity prohibited to a State Party under this Convention.

Does the bill that should, above all, fulfill these obligations to the international community pass the test?

● (2005)

According to Earl Turcotte, the former coordinator of mine action at DFAIT and the head of the Canadian delegation that negotiated the convention, the answer is no. Mr. Turcotte said:

The proposed legislation is the worst of any country that has ratified or acceded to the Convention on Cluster Munitions to date. It fails to fulfill Canada's obligations under international humanitarian law; it fails to protect vulnerable civilians in war-ravaged countries around the world; it betrays the trust of sister states who negotiated this treaty in good faith, and it fails Canadians who expect far better from our nation.

Government Orders

I am not the one who said that; it was Earl Turcotte. He is the fellow who was hired to sign a real convention, one that was really binding on arms manufacturers. He is the fellow Canada sent to help bring peace to the world, which should be our objective as a pacifist country.

We therefore see here what this bill does not do. What does it do, then, if it does not fulfill the primary reason for its existence? To understand what the bill does, we have to look at a process that is not without interest. It is all proceeding as if the Conservative government had thrown a bomblet into the treaty negotiations.

The people in charge of the negotiations for Canada had to bargain hard to have article 26 of the convention, on the interoperability of the signatory countries, included. Essentially, because China, Russia and the United States refuse to sign, it would be hard not to do business with them, is that not so? The people in place at the time of the negotiations succeeded in having that article accepted for Canada, but they are surprised to see, today, that the spirit of the convention is undermined by clause 11 of the bill introduced to address article 26, which Canada requested.

The bomblet that is clause 11 permits Canadian troops to use, obtain, possess or transport cluster munitions in the course of joint operations with another country that is not a party to the convention and to request the use of cluster munitions by the armed forces of another country. We will be able to say that we do not make them, but our troops are going to be transporting them.

The Conservative government has thus destroyed the spirit of the convention for good. Flesh will be ripped apart, hearts will be broken and communities will be torn by grief. I would have liked to see a little more leadership on the part of this government. I would have liked our colleagues across the aisle to make speeches, and I would have liked to be able to ask them questions and get more information. I expected a lot more leadership. I am certain that the people of Joliette, whom I represent, have had enough of learning that under the Conservatives, Canada has withdrawn from important international treaties like the Kyoto protocol, which people talk to me about when I go door to door, and is going so far as to sabotage peace efforts at the international level.

When the Conservatives behave in this manner, they show the entire world their true colours, colours that we do not share. On behalf of Joliette and all of Canada, I would like to send this message to the rest of the world: those are not our colours. They are the colours of a minority that obtained a majority in the House of Commons and, for that reason, that minority believes that it is leading on behalf of the majority. Let us hope that the government will agree to do the right thing by amending its bill at third reading. In my opinion, that is the only thing to do for Canada, for its international reputation and for the civilian victims in countries at war.

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I found my colleague's speech rather interesting. I am wondering if she would have known what she was talking about had she not read a speech prepared by someone else.

Frankly, the fact that she is calling Canada a pacifist country leads me to believe that the United States entered the First World War before we did. That is not the case. She also gave the impression

that, during the Second World War, the United States were battling against the fascism of Nazi Germany before we were. That is also not the case. Her speech gave me the impression that we never went to Korea and that we did not do an extremely tough job in Afghanistan.

Canada is not a pacifist country. I do not know where she got that idea, and I do not know why she is reading speeches written by someone else.

• (2010)

Ms. Francine Raynault: Mr. Speaker, with your permission, I am going to refuse to answer that question. I simply refuse to allow someone to tell me that I do not write my own speeches. I would have liked to hear a speech from the member opposite so that the NDP could ask him some questions.

Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my hon. colleague from Joliette for her excellent speech. She is an excellent speaker, and we and the people of Joliette are very proud of the job she does.

The Conservatives have read a few too many history books. As a former member of the military, I find it insulting that they would have the gall to say that soldiers would use this type of munition at all costs. I doubt that any soldier would be proud to go into a country to help people, knowing that he is leaving behind munitions, weapons or remnants of war that could kill children and civilians. That is never the intent.

I am insulted to hear my colleague say that Canada is not a pacifist country. Yes, Canada has participated in conflicts, but we have always had the backbone tell the United States that what it was doing was not right and that we would not follow the U.S. if it did not fulfill certain conditions.

I do not know who the Conservatives think they are, but they are certainly not the government.

Ms. Francine Raynault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Repentigny for his question.

I sometimes get visits at my office from members of the military, and what they have been through is no laughing matter. They have seen the horrors of war. If I understand correctly, my colleague was once a member of the military.

My grandson wants to enlist in the army to help people. I hope that he will never go to another country to be blown up.

[English]

Hon. Laurie Hawa (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our colleagues on the other side talk about wanting to hear speeches from this side. We did give speeches. Last time, I gave one and a number of other members gave them as well. The opposition has complained about not having enough time to speak. Well, we are giving them five or six hours, so they can speak their little hearts out.

Government Orders

We can go back and forth like this, and that is great, I have no problem with that. I want to pick up on something the member said about how a minority of people elected this government to a majority government. That is true, 62% of Canadians did not vote Conservative in the last election, 72% did not vote NDP, 82% did not vote Liberal, and 95%, plus or minus, did not vote Green or Bloc.

Of the majority governments we have had in Canada, five in our entire history had been elected with more than 50% of the popular vote. Trudeau never had one. Chrétien never had one. Let us put that part aside.

Getting back to the issue of Bill C-6, the suggestion that this bill allows us to use, produce, acquire, transfer, or incite and encourage others to use cluster munitions is simply false. That is just not true. I wish the hon. member would not intimate that.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Raynault: Mr. Speaker, there are no words.

Even though my colleague made a speech earlier, we would have liked to hear from our colleagues opposite once again.

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, sometimes we hear all kinds of things in the House. From time to time, we have to show some humility and move forward to debate a matter as important as this one. This is an important subject for us and for many of our constituents.

In recent weeks, I have spent time with a number of World War II veterans, including those who took part in the Normandy landing. One of them honoured us with his presence in the House a few weeks ago.

When these soldiers go to war, they do not want to kill anyone. The only thing they think about is saving lives and ensuring that the country they are fighting for, whether their own or an allied country, can live in peace. It is not true that Canada is not a pacifist country. That is absolutely and utterly false. It is insulting to hear such words. When soldiers go to war, they do not go to start a war; they go to end a war, to live in peace and to secure democracy in a modern and prosperous country. Canada is a modern and prosperous society.

When our soldiers went on a peacekeeping mission in Cypress or Sarajevo and had to engage in combat, they did so in order to protect themselves and return home after completing their mission. These soldiers leave on a mission. They are not always aware of the collateral damage of their battle or their fight, and that is probably what is most perverse about cluster munitions. When soldiers leave the battlefield, what is left behind? That is what we have to examine. We have to look at that more than the Oslo convention or the bill. We have to know what the collateral damage is. Why do we have to ensure that the weapons we use cause the least amount of collateral damage? It is difficult because at that point, soldiers are on the front line, in an industry of war.

There was Agent Orange in Vietnam, and then everything that happened with the attacks in Iraq. There was collateral damage. I am talking about nuclear enrichment and weapons. They always create collateral damage. Canada is a country that promotes peace. It has often been involved in talks and was even a leader, notably with Princess Diana, when it came to establishing specific rules to combat

the use of land mines. Despite all those efforts, our soldiers and the local population in combat zones are often victims of collateral damage.

I will say it again: that is the worst part of all of this. That is what we need to address, instead of trying to pass a bill that contradicts itself. According to clause 11, our soldiers could come into contact with these weapons, which are prohibited under clause 6. That is both absurd and worrisome. When our soldiers are engaged in combat alongside our allies, no matter who they are—most times it is the Americans—they obey their orders. On the ground, soldiers must obey any orders that are given. Soldiers want to be sure that at the end of the mission, there is peace. It does not matter where on the planet they are.

It is important to point out that Canada is a leader and always has been. Just think about Lester B. Pearson's peace missions. He even won a Nobel Peace Prize for his involvement. It is important to remember that. That is leadership.

● (2015)

It is important to say that because leadership must be perpetuated. We must perpetuate it. In spite of everything, we live in quite a prosperous country. There may be controversies, and we may debate economic development issues, for example, and hold contradictory opinions because we do not agree with each other. However, when the Canadian Armed Forces go into combat or on a mission, their purpose is more to save than to destroy.

I was astounded by one figure I heard: global stockpiles of these weapons amount to approximately four billion bomblets. Four billion. One-quarter of those bombs are held by the Americans, with whom we often go on peacekeeping or combat missions, and there will be other similar missions. Let us look at what is going on in Syria and Africa. Who knows when we will be called upon to take part in a future mission? Once again, our soldiers will be in contact with these weapons. It is therefore somewhat meaningless for a bill to include one clause that contradicts another. I do not understand that based on what little law I studied. A bill must be completely harmonious. However, this one contradicts itself.

As regards collateral damage, 22 members of the Canadian Armed Forces were killed in 2006 and 112 were seriously wounded in Afghanistan by these kinds of weapons, either cluster munitions or anti-personnel mines.

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Those are the figures we have, Mr. Speaker. It is true that collateral damage occurs, because civilians have even been killed by these weapons, and CBC journalists who witnessed that have also been severely wounded.

Apart from clause 11, what does the wording of the bill say? It refers to the prohibition of these weapons, and yet people will be in contact with them. Soldiers will carry out their missions right to the end because they are honest men acting in good faith who defend their honour. However, it is utterly absurd that hundreds of thousands of people should suffer the collateral damage caused by this kind of weapon. These are innocent victims who will lose an arm, a leg or both. Their lives will be ruined forever. This is completely ridiculous.

Government Orders

If the government wanted to introduce a bill that is true to our tradition and certainly to our nature as a peace-loving country, it would have to ensure that, no matter where our soldiers are deployed, they will not come into contact with this type of weapon. Of course, that is virtually impossible. At least if the bill conveyed that intent, we could say that the legislative body, the House of Commons, had done its duty.

I will ignore all of the comments about whether we should debate this or not. This will end soon, and we will all spend a lovely summer campaigning in our ridings.

● (2020)

[*English*]

Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Carleton—Mississippi Mills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the spokesperson for the opposition and I have to question a few points.

First of all, he said that soldiers are out fighting for democracy. We did not fight for democracy in Afghanistan. We did not fight for democracy in Iraq. We did not fight for democracy in Libya. In the 1950s when we were in Korea, the south was not a democracy, and we did not fight for democracy either. Fighting as a soldier does not mean we have to fight for democracy. Sometimes we do and sometimes we do not.

The member also mentioned pacifism. We do not have an aura of pacifism about us. We have never been pacifists. We always fight for a cause and we stay with that cause.

● (2025)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Mr. Speaker, I am astounded that anyone would make such comments. The member said that we are not a pacifist country. We all know that when soldiers go to war, they go to war. We know what that means.

Fundamentally, the people of Canada, from coast to coast to coast, are pacifists who want peace. Of course we fight for democracy when we go to war. Our boys fought in the Second World War to uphold democracy and ensure that we would not have to pay a bloody price for our right to vote. It is insulting to hear such comments in the House.

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what a circus this is. I have met some of the members opposite under other circumstances, and while I find them to be truly honourable, I cannot believe that they have the gall to make such inappropriate comments tonight. Saying that democracy is heavy and complex is absolutely pathetic.

Will my colleague find it deplorable to have to tell his constituents about the debate he had with these people, who usually have good heads on their shoulders and represent other Canadians with whom we share these values? These people are saying that we are not pacifists.

To most Canadians, it is clear that Canada is not a militaristic country that engages in offensive action. The vast majority of our military involvement is peacekeeping. Failing to recognize that makes absolutely no sense.

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Mr. Speaker, I have a feeling that Canada is being made out to be a sometime instigator of conflicts. That is totally ludicrous. It is a regressive and totally outdated view. I have spent time with colleagues opposite, and I can tell you that that is not the way they see things.

They can clown around all they like. We will see which clowns will be at the starting gate in 2015. I am convinced that half of them will not have the nerve to even show up.

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): I have a very simple question, Mr. Speaker.

Does the hon. member, who believes Canada is a pacifist country, realize that even the illustrious Lester B. Pearson took part in wars? Does he know that even Lester B. Pearson fought to defend Canadian ideals in the First World War?

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Mr. Speaker, one could argue the member is contradicting himself. If Lester B. Pearson went to war, it is because he knew he would save his country, his Queen and his democracy. The fact that Mr. Pearson went to war does not make him an aggressor.

That is called freedom. We are the ones fighting for freedom, which has ceased to exist in the House of Commons under Conservative rule.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order. Before we resume debate, I would ask all members if they could listen to the member who has the floor. If they are unable to do so, then they may need to go for a walk or something.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Saint-Lambert is rising on a point of order.

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Mr. Speaker, the NDP is here tonight to discuss Bill C-6, a bill of some import. We would like to discuss it to impress upon the members opposite that some of its clauses are contradictory. We wish to continue discussing it.

I would like for cooler heads to prevail and for members to stop getting riled up and totally distorting the message we wish to send Canadians.

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is a strange atmosphere in which to start my speech on Bill C-6 but I will jump right into it anyway. I first want to preface my remarks by reassuring my colleagues opposite that I have a clear understanding of the issue here and that I wrote my speech myself.

I hope that this will not lead my colleagues opposite, such as the member for Ottawa—Orléans, to make disrespectful remarks. I hope I will not hear any more such comments when I finish my speech. Frankly, I thought that debates in the House of Commons were supposed to be more courteous. I find such comments to be far beneath an experienced member like him, who has been in the House for years and who once held the position of Speaker.

In any case, let me get back to the subject at hand, which is Bill C-6, An Act to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions. This is a very important debate in the House, and that is why the NDP wants to take the time to debate the bill properly.

Government Orders

I have heard many comments from the Conservative backbenchers, but not one member has risen to actively participate in this debate in the House. That is a terrible shame. I guess they think they have done enough to earn their salaries.

The NDP thinks it is important to be the voice of the people who we represent and who sent us to the House to debate issues that are important to them, including international policy issues. A Conservative member said that he had made a speech just a few days ago. That is extraordinary. One speech in all the time that was allocated to members of the governing party. That really is unfortunate.

Bill C-6 seeks to finally implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions. This is an issue that has been the subject of international debate for many years now. The convention in question is the result of negotiations between over 100 countries as part of the Oslo process, which came on the heels of the successes of the Ottawa treaty to ban land mines.

Although Canada became one of the 113 signatories to the convention on December 3, 2008, the convention has yet to be ratified by our Parliament. This is what Bill C-6 is attempting to do, in its clumsy way. Cluster munitions have a devastating and direct impact on civilian populations, as the NDP has already discussed at length.

The Conservatives have told us repeatedly that we need these weapons to defend our military personnel during international operations. They seem to forget that 98% of the time, victims of cluster munitions are civilians. Not only are they civilians, but many victims are children. About 30% of submunitions fail to explode and remain on the ground. Children are attracted to these small, sometimes brightly coloured objects and pick them up. Submunitions then function just like land mines.

Canada has clearly stated its opposition to the use of land mines. However, the Conservative government will not hear of prohibiting the use of cluster munitions, which end up acting just like land mines. Unexploded submunitions remain on the ground for years. They keep on claiming victims long after the fighting is over.

Ratifying this convention is very important to Canada. People I talk to are concerned about these types of issues, and they would like to see Canada take a leadership position on the world stage.

Unfortunately, once again the Conservatives are dropping the ball. The bill in its current form does not at all live up to the mission of the convention that was negotiated.

In fact, the bill presented to us by the Conservatives contradicts and undermines the international treaty it is meant to implement. It is very contradictory, and that is what we are trying to shed light on in this debate, which apparently is too long for the Conservatives, but is essential for the NDP. This is a complex issue. We must take our time with it. We must give this bill the time it deserves. It has already gone through committee. The NDP worked with the government to try to improve the bill. However, there is still work to be done.

• (2030)

In its current form, Bill C-6 is still today being criticized by many experts and international players as the weakest and worst bill in the

world for ratifying the Convention on Cluster Munitions. There is nothing to be proud of—quite the contrary.

The major problem is that the Conservatives did everything to ensure that this bill included a lot of legal loopholes, which seem unnecessary and dangerous to us. That is what the NDP focused its efforts on in committee and continues to focus on.

We think the main flaw in the bill is clause 11, which is still included. That clause would allow Canadian soldiers to acquire, possess or transport cluster munitions whenever they are acting in conjunction with another country that is not a party to the convention and to request the use of cluster munitions by another country. Clearly, the government made only half an effort to control the use of these weapons. We think that is not enough.

We nevertheless managed to make one amendment to the bill at committee stage. The NDP's efforts were rewarded. The government finally admitted that it would not necessarily be a good idea to expressly allow Canadian soldiers to use cluster munitions. However, it is a rather small victory considering all the work that remains to be done.

If no further changes are made to the bill at the stage it has reached, although amendments could still be made, the bill could undermine the international implementation of the convention by creating dangerous precedents that other countries could rely on. The exemptions currently found in the bill could be invoked by other countries that want to justify keeping or even using the weapons in their arsenals. That is what most of the international community and the NDP are trying to avoid. Unfortunately, once again, Canada was the black sheep and tried to do everything it could to undermine the essence of the convention. It is really too bad, but we still can do the right thing, even if that is not the Conservatives' way.

This is not the first time that they have watered down the principles and values dear to Canadians on the international stage. I could talk about environmental treaties, such as the Kyoto protocol, which are not being honoured. An even more striking example is the 2009 scandal that broke over the transfer of Afghan detainees. We learned that in 2006-07, the Conservative government had expressly approved the transfer of Afghan detainees to prisons where there was a significant risk that they would be tortured.

Canada is a signatory to the Geneva convention. Before the arrival of the Conservative government, we were strongly opposed to torture. For various reasons, the Conservatives allowed violations of the values so dear to Canadians and permitted the transfer of Afghan detainees to prisons where they were tortured.

Government Orders

It is obvious that the Conservatives do not care about the values and principles that matter to Canadians. Earlier, I heard them going on about how Canada is not a pacifist country. That is unbelievable. They need a history lesson. I will not give it to them now, since I do not think they would listen, which is too bad. Regardless, as I just showed, the Conservatives are once again flouting the values and principles that matter to Canadians.

We are not finished. The NDP will continue to work with the government to amend the bill to ensure that it complies with the convention that has been negotiated and ratified by more than 80 countries so far. We simply need to remove clause 11. That is what we are asking for. I hope that the government will finally listen.

• (2035)

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague across the way a question.

I would like to correct her on one thing. She said that we were saying that we need these weapons. No one on this side ever said we needed them at all. In fact, they are reprehensible. We all want to get rid of them, and we are taking a leadership role internationally with the other countries in working toward this.

I want to quote testimony given by General Natynczyk in committee. He said:

My assessment is that the fulfillment of their routine military duties should not expose them to prosecution, for example, for calling in aircraft to save the lives of our soldiers or allowing an aircraft to land on an airfield we control, for air-to-air refuelling of fighter aircraft, for sharing of intelligence....

He went on to say:

Having had the exchange experience as the deputy commanding general of the Multi-National Force—Iraq throughout 2004, I can say to you with confidence that I was never aware that cluster bombs were actually stocked in theatre or that I participated in planning for their use or, in fact, authorized their use. I had none of that experience whatsoever.

However, unwittingly I could have done so, and I could have participated in activities, without my knowledge, that assisted in the use of cluster munitions, but I would not have known it at that time.

That is what clause 11 is all about. Does the hon. member not think it is important to protect our soldiers in the event that this happens, even though we have the amendment to say that they cannot use them specifically?

• (2040)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Éloïse Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the tone he has had throughout this debate. It is quite refreshing.

First, Canada needs to take a leadership role to convince our allies and partners to stop using these weapons. Second, we need to look at the possibility of negotiating with our allies about how Canada will be involved in the missions it chooses to participate in.

We need to respect our own values and culture. The Canadian public expects certain things from the Canadian Armed Forces. It is up to the government and the Chief of the Defence Staff to negotiate and make sure that our decisions and our values are respected when we undertake missions with other allies.

I do not know whether the Conservatives have explored that, since collaboration and discussion are not their strong suits, but it may be something to keep in mind and to explore in the future.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, periodically I like to interject to provide some thoughts in regard to the issue the member made reference to, which is the issue of international leadership. Earlier I made reference to the fact that it was the Ottawa treaty that dealt with the issue of land mines. Individuals such as Lloyd Axworthy played a critical role in advancing that.

The Convention on Cluster Munitions was actually signed back in 2008, so it has been a number of years and the government has not been able to bring in the legislation. As has been pointed out, the legislation has some serious issues that cause international concern.

Would the member not agree that Canada is losing out by not providing strong international leadership on such an important issue, given our past record, particularly on the Ottawa treaty, which dealt with the horrendous land mines?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Éloïse Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his question. He has captured the essence of what I was trying to raise in the House.

Canada has always played a leadership role. The Conservatives seem to have forgotten, but before they arrived on the scene, our country was known as a pacifist country. I know that will make the Conservatives scream and shout, but I will continue to use that word. It is a proud part of our heritage. We have every reason to be proud.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Ms. Éloïse Michaud: I definitely saw that coming, Mr. Speaker. The word “pacifist” gets a rise out of them every time. They seem to think it is really insulting, which I find fascinating.

In any event, despite their shouting, Canada has a responsibility to regain its international and humanitarian reputation. Unfortunately, the Conservatives have destroyed it, and we are a disgrace around the world. I know people who refuse to wear the Canadian flag when they go abroad because of the terrible reputation this government has given us. The Conservatives would do well to learn from history. They need to change their attitude, and quickly.

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP): Mr. Speaker, tonight we are debating Bill C-6, An Act to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

Cluster munitions can release hundreds of explosives over a large area—one approximately the size of a football field, or 100 square metres—in a very short period of time. They have a devastating impact on civilians, and that impact can last many years after a conflict has ended.

Government Orders

How many countries have had to have cleanup operations after a conflict? Unfortunately, not everything can be removed. Some cluster munitions remain, and it is usually civilians who pay the price. Children are often drawn to the submunitions, which are about the size of a golf ball, cylindrical and eye-catching. Many children pay the price, often with their life.

We know how devastating and inconspicuous these landmines can be for the civilian population. Unfortunately, they are extremely difficult to detect. They can be as small as a golf ball, and they are often very difficult to defuse. Thirty per cent of these unexploded submunitions become the equivalent of land mines.

They have inflicted terrible damage during conflicts around the world. They have mutilated and killed children and adults. Fully 98% of all cluster bomb casualties have been civilians.

Is this the kind of international leadership that Canada should take with respect to land mines and cluster bombs? Not at all. Canadians took a stand on this issue long ago, but in this case, the Conservatives are going against what Canadians want.

Canada participated actively in the Oslo process that led to the creation of a convention to ban cluster bombs. People have been wanting to get rid of these weapons for a very long time. Unfortunately, the Conservatives' bill to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions is widely known as the weakest position of all of the countries that ratified the convention and passed legislation on the issue. It goes against the spirit of the convention.

As written, this bill is less binding than any other law passed by the countries that ratified the convention. One hundred and thirteen countries signed the convention and 84 have ratified it to date. Once again, instead of showing leadership, the Conservative government is bringing up the rear and seems bent on undermining the impact of the convention.

Earl Turcotte, former senior program coordinator for mine action at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, led the Canadian delegation that negotiated this convention. Here is what Mr. Turcotte said about the government's bill:

The proposed legislation is the worst of any country that has ratified or acceded to the Convention on Cluster Munitions to date.

It fails to fulfill Canada's obligations under international humanitarian law; it fails to protect vulnerable civilians in war-ravaged countries around the world; it betrays the trust of sister states who negotiated this treaty in good faith, and it fails Canadians who expect far better from our nation.

There are several loopholes in this bill, and if they are not closed, Canada's commitment to ending the use of cluster munitions will be superficial at best. Indeed, if Bill C-6 is not amended, it may even work against the convention on an international level, as Earl Turcotte warned.

However, we should not be surprised by the direction that the Conservatives are taking in terms of arms control when we consider their general reluctance to take action on this file. In fact, they refused to sign the UN Arms Trade Treaty, which was signed by all our NATO allies, and it relaxed restrictions on arms exports. This attitude is contrary to the will and values of Canadians.

The bill was criticized by many experts and by those who firmly believe that we must rid the world of cluster munitions. Criticism

was mainly levelled at clause 11. This clause authorizes the Canadian Forces to be present in a theatre of operations where cluster munitions are used.

● (2045)

This flies in the face of what we did in the case of the Ottawa treaty, which bans anti-personnel mines. It stipulated that if we were to find ourselves in a theatre of operations alongside any other country that had not signed the Ottawa treaty, we could not participate in combined operations with the troops of that country if they were using such weapons.

This bill has a flaw, a loophole, that basically says that we can be in a theatre of operations when one of our allies is using these munitions. That is completely unacceptable, and it goes against the spirit of the convention.

The government's objective is not to ratify or implement this convention. With the results we see, its objective is to undermine or weaken the convention. It also undermines Canada's role as a world leader and our commitment to ban this terrible weapon.

In the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, the NDP offered its support to Canadian and foreign civilian organizations that were calling for this bill to be amended. We worked closely, publicly and directly with the government, and we managed to persuade it to expressly prohibit the use of cluster munitions by Canadian soldiers. In concrete terms, that means that Canadian soldiers may not directly use this type of weapon but that they may take part in operations and be on the ground where those weapons have been used.

How can the government prohibit their direct use by the Canadian Forces, on the one hand, and let our forces take part in joint operations with partners who use this kind of weapon, on the other? Canada expressly prohibited the involvement of its armed forces in the case of anti-personnel mines. We could therefore implement the same kind of prohibition for this type of weapon. This is a 180-degree change from the position we held on anti-personnel mines.

If the government does not decide to withdraw clause 11 with the amendment at report stage, we will unfortunately be forced to vote against the bill. That would be unfortunate, but we would have no choice.

● (2050)

[*English*]

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this will be more on the comment side. I want to clear up some of the misstatements of fact that have been made in the last little while.

First of all, there have been zero Canadians killed or injured by cluster munitions in Afghanistan, zero.

Second, the opposition talked about wanting to debate and that is terrific. They wrote all these speeches and that is great, but it sounds as if they sat around the same table at the same time, because the speeches have a remarkable similarity, and that is okay.

Government Orders

Mr. Claude Gravelle: We are all talking about the same thing.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Another point that was brought up by another person across the way suggested that Canadians are allowed to transport munitions. That is not true. That is absolutely not true. It is false. The member should withdraw that statement. I know she will not, but that is okay.

Going back to my colleague, the retired general from Carleton—Mississippi Mills, we are not a pacifist nation. We were not pacifists in 1914, 1939, 1950, 1991—

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Oh, shut up.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: No, I am sorry, but I will not shut up. I am going to speak the truth. I am going to speak the truth, and I would ask my hon. colleagues—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, order. I would encourage all hon. members to remain in their seats and listen to whoever has the floor at that time. This applies to both sides of the Chamber tonight.

I would also remind members that they are not allowed to use unparliamentary language when they are speaking. They are not supposed to be heckling in the first place, so if members refrain from heckling, then they will avoid using non-parliamentary language while heckling.

I am going to go back to the hon. member for a quick wrap-up. He has about 10 seconds.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, in point of fact, the general was right. We fight for freedom. That is what we fight for, the freedom for people to make their own choice on what they want to do. Afghanistan will never be a democracy like Canada. We fought for their freedom.

With respect to detainees, I really take offence. I know that file inside out. There was never any evidence at all from the Red Cross or—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, order.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Châteauguay—Saint-Constant.

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine: Mr. Speaker, I will only be making comments since I heard no questions in what my colleague said. He is putting words in my mouth. He wants to identify our country as an aggressive nation, whereas that is not the case. I think that is what my colleagues who spoke previously wanted to say. Our country has come to the defence of allied countries. We fight for freedom and for the Canadian values that we want to uphold, regardless of what my colleague thinks.

In future, I would invite my colleagues to ask questions on what I myself said, not on what others said an hour ago. I think we have to move away from that kind of discussion.

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his speech.

I would like to return to the heart of the issue before us tonight, namely Bill C-6, and ask my colleague to comment on the position of Paul Hannon, the executive director of Mines Action Canada. He had this to say about the bill:

Canada should have the best domestic legislation in the world. We need to make it clear that no Canadian will ever be involved with this weapon again, but from our reading, this legislation falls well short of those standards.

What are my colleague's thoughts on this?

• (2055)

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

She just quoted Mr. Hannon, the executive director of Mines Action Canada, who appeared before the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development when it was studying this bill.

I cannot agree more with that statement since article 21 will allow our soldiers to use cluster munitions while participating in missions with allied countries that have not ratified the convention. I believe the government lacks leadership. Mr. Hannon was absolutely right.

[*English*]

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before I start into my speech, I would like to recount a first-hand account on the use of cluster munitions.

I used cluster bombs on Iraqi forces in 1991. To this day, they are still killing the people we went to liberate. I have personal experience with these weapons. Fighting alongside Canada's troops, I used cluster munitions in 1991 against Iraqi forces during the liberation of Kuwait. The target was a set of slit trenches. I released the two CBU-87s bombs, each containing hundreds of smaller "submunitions," from a steep dive. I can still see the two huge doughnut-shaped "footprints" of the submunition explosions forming, slightly overlapping. With a series of flashes, the area around the target disappeared into dust and smoke, hiding the trenches and the last of the explosions from view. The blast area was equivalent to several soccer fields. I remember thinking it must have been hell on Earth to have been in the trench. All four of us in the formation were struck by the effect. Afterwards, someone wrote two words in the "remarks" column in the sheet authorizing the mission: "Nasty weapon." But we didn't know how nasty. We knew that some of the submunitions would not detonate, and that that would make it difficult for the enemy to operate in that area. But I had no idea that there would be nearly 200 casualties suffered by Kuwaitis — the people we were fighting to liberate — over the next 15 years. Or that two decades later, despite massive clearance efforts, unexploded submunitions would still be found. Or that by far the greatest proportion of recorded cluster munition casualties are civilian, many of them children.

That really sums up why we need to be passing this treaty and why we need to be ratifying it.

Also, Canada has a leading role to play in this. Sadly, the government is missing the opportunity by including things like clause 11 and working in the loopholes in the original convention that would allow for laggards to continue to operate and use these munitions and for Canada to stand idly by.

As we have heard from other speakers this evening, New Democrats fully supported the creation of the treaty to ban cluster munitions. That treaty or convention has been signed by 113 countries and has been ratified by 84. Supposedly, this bill is meant to represent Canada's ratification of the convention, but this bill undermines that convention. With this bill the government is trying to introduce a major loophole that will make Canada's commitment to ending the use of cluster munitions superficial at best.

Government Orders

The problem is that Canada succeeded in negotiating into the final text of the convention an article that explicitly allows for continued military interoperability with non-party states. Then, in developing this legislation, the government added clause 11, which establishes an extremely broad list of exemptions. This clause permitted Canadian soldiers to use, acquire, possess, and transport cluster munitions whenever they are acting in conjunction with another country that is not a member of the convention and, worse still, to request the use of cluster munitions by other countries.

The International Committee of the Red Cross commented about this particular part of the legislation saying that section 11:

...could permit activities that undermine the object and purpose of the convention and ultimately contribute to the continued use of cluster munitions rather than bringing about their elimination.

The NDP members fought hard at committee to make changes to this clause and other sections of the bill, but were only successful in getting the Conservatives to formerly prohibit the use of cluster munitions by Canadian soldiers. However, we will take every little win on this kind of legislation that would limit the contact that our soldiers might come into with respect to cluster munitions and other weapons that we find reprehensible and heinous to use.

Like so many times before, the government has been unwilling to listen to many opposition amendments simply because the ideas did not come from it. This is a government that refused to correct grammar in another bill because it came from the opposition, forcing the change to be made at the Senate and then brought back here, wasting all of our valuable time and energy.

Of course other loopholes remain. Without amendments to rectify these loopholes, Canada's commitment to ending the use of cluster munitions would be superficial at best. In fact, it may even damage the convention as a whole by establishing an international precedent for opting out and exemption. The legislation to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions is widely recognized as the weakest and worst in the world, so we are not leading, we are trailing behind other countries in this area.

• (2100)

As a couple of my colleagues have mentioned, Earl Turcotte, a former senior coordinator from mine action at DFAIT, said about Bill C-6:

...the proposed Canadian legislation is the worst of any country that has ratified or acceded to the convention, to date.

It fails to fulfill Canada's obligations under international humanitarian law; it fails to protect vulnerable civilians in war-ravaged countries around the world; it betrays the trust of sister states who negotiated this treaty in good faith, and it fails Canadians who expect far better from our nation.

I wonder if maybe that quote is why no member of the government is willing to get up and defend this legislation. Then we would have the opportunity to ask them questions about what he said about how this legislation would not meet our obligations under international and humanitarian law and that it would fail to protect civilians in war-torn countries.

All night long it has been New Democrats getting up and the Conservatives making snide remarks and talking about our ideals and making fun of pacifism and peacekeeping, which was a Canadian invention. The incredulous comments just continue

without abating. The Conservatives are not willing to get up and defend this legislation. It is really an impressive thing when a government is not willing to stand up and defend its own decisions.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: What have I been doing for the last two hours?

Mr. Dan Harris: The Conservatives have not been defending their position, Mr. Speaker. They have been attacking ours. If they had any courage in the House, then at least one of them, maybe a minister or a backbencher, would get up and give a speech and tell us why we should not ratify this convention, why we should be making changes.

Why are we leaving loopholes in the bill that would allow Canadians to stand alongside others who are using them, that would allow Canadians to call in cluster bomb attacks if they are on detached service with other countries?

Why will no members of the government get up to defend their position?

Mr. Claude Gravelle: It's not defensible. It's not defensible.

Mr. Dan Harris: That is right, Mr. Speaker. It is not defensible, so the Conservatives are not even going to try to defend it. They are just going to sit here and make snide remarks. They are not going to get up and explain to Canadians why the bill contains that clause 11. Before members of the government decide to get up and actually ask a question or make a comment, they might want to take a bit of time to explain why clause 11 is there and why Canadians should be working alongside member states that are using these weapons.

The quote that I started my speech with talks about how 20 years later these munitions are still going off and maiming people. They are still killing civilians and children. Why the government would defend a loophole that would allow that to continue is beyond me. It is certainly not a Canadian value.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Then it's beyond you. That is for sure.

Mr. Dan Harris: They like to agree with each other, Mr. Speaker, but they do not ask Canadians what they think about this legislation. If they did, Canadians would tell them as they are saying on Twitter and elsewhere tonight, that they do not believe that clause 11 is necessary, that they believe that Canada should be a world leader when it comes to ending cluster munitions like we were with the land mine treaty. That is the kind of leadership Canadians expect from our country. They do not like imposing loopholes that would allow these reprehensible, heinous weapons to continue to be used.

Government Orders

One of our major partners, the United States, has a quarter of the world's stockpile of these munitions. Does that mean we stop working with that country? Absolutely not. It means that Canada should take a stand and say we are not going to work alongside these munitions, that we do not condone the use of these munitions in theatres of operation where Canadians are going to be, not only for our own protection but for the protection of the civilians who are going to be there 20 years down the road, the children not even born yet but who will be maimed or killed by the unexploded munitions.

I would like to give members a reference. The lawn of Parliament Hill is not even the size of several soccer fields. If just one of these munitions went off in this area it would contaminate the area. People would not be able to live or work in peace in the area for many years to come.

I look forward to questions from the government.

• (2105)

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am not sure what we have been doing here for the last two and a half hours if not actually debating back and forth and refuting points, one side to the other. That is fine. That is what is called debate. No one is condoning the use of cluster munitions. That is why we got rid of ours. We are in the process of getting rid of the last ones. That is why we do not allow any Canadian to use them, transport them, call for them, any of those things members intimate we are still doing.

My colleague brought up the land mine treaty. It was a good treaty that Canada signed and ratified. The land mine treaty has clauses that are the same as clause 11 in Bill C-6 for the same reason. We operate with allies, principally the Americans who have reasons of their own. We cannot dictate to the U.S. what its reasons and policies are, but it is reality. It is the reality Americans deal with and it is the reality we deal with, working with the Americans as we do on pretty much every single mission. It is no different than the land mine treaty.

One of the reasons we are insisting on clause 11 is because it is common sense and it is reality. That does not mean we condone the use of the weapons at all, but it is just reality.

Mr. Dan Harris: Mr. Speaker, the member says they do not condone the use of the weapons, but at the same time they expressly put in a loophole to allow Canadians on detached service to serve alongside folks who are using them. That is not just the United States. That would be any country that is not a signatory to this bill that we entered into joint operations with. We never know which partners we are going to have in the future on specific missions.

The amendment that was passed specifically stopped Canadians from being able to use it as part of detached service, but it did not prohibit all the rest, that would allow Canadian soldiers to serve alongside, that would allow Canadian soldiers to participate in the transportation and be part of a group that had these munitions and that might be using them.

I, for one, would not want any of our Canadian Armed Forces soldiers to have that kind of guilt on their conscience, to have been part of the use of these kinds of heinous weapons that, as I quoted, would actually be maiming and killing people 20 years later.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during my military training, when I saw officers coming back deeply traumatized from their experience in Bosnia, none of them proudly said how much fun it would have been to leave behind a few surprises that would hurt people and blow them up. On the contrary, they deeply regretted not having the chance to do more to help civilians. I have never seen a well-balanced soldier go overseas with the intent of leaving behind something that would hurt civilians or children.

Since the government is proudly planning to leave that crap behind, will it identify each munition with a small Canadian flag? This would remind future generations and their grandchildren that Canada was once in their country.

• (2110)

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order. I am not sure how the translator translated the one word, but I again would remind all hon. members to stick to parliamentary language.

The hon. member for Scarborough Southwest.

Mr. Dan Harris: Mr. Speaker, I could not help but hear the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration pass the comment about being classy. This is the minister who said it is not Canadians' responsibility to deal with children who are sick if they do not have refugee status. I think, and most Canadians think, that we should be taking care of all children in this country regardless of their background, regardless of where they come from, regardless of their status, because they are children. That is classy. That minister is not classy.

In response to my colleague's comments about not wanting to leave things behind, this is why I am so proud of the Canadians who have served in uniform, because they do not want to do harm. They want to help and make a more peaceful world. They want to make a safe world so that their children and the children from all countries of the world can grow up in peace and prosperity and live in dignity and not have to suffer the fear that would come about from the continued use of these munitions.

Again, I want to implore the government to think about what these munitions do and why Conservatives want to put in this clause that would allow the continued use of these munitions.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to address an important issue on Bill C-6, An Act to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions. The NDP opposes Bill C-6 in its current form on the grounds that it contradicts and undermines the international treaty it is supposed to implement. Bills that implement international treaties should not work at cross purposes from the treaty itself.

The NDP attempted to amend the bill at committee, however, the Conservatives only allowed one small change, which would leave its weak support for the treaty in place.

Government Orders

Let us be clear about how serious this issue is and how dangerous cluster munitions are. Cluster munitions can release hundreds of explosives over a large area in a very short period of time and have a devastating impact on civilians that can last many years after the conflict has ended.

In 2006, 22 Canadian Forces members were killed and 112 wounded in Afghanistan as a result of land mines, cluster bombs and other explosive devices.

[*Translation*]

Submunitions are very small, often similar in size to a D battery or a tennis ball. Furthermore, 30% remain unexploded and become, in fact, land mines. A single cluster bomb holds hundreds of submunitions, enough to cover an area the size of two to four football fields.

[*English*]

As members can see, these incredibly small devices, the size of a tennis ball, can project death and danger as far as four football fields away.

Canada participated actively in what was known as the “Oslo process” to produce a convention to ban the use of cluster munitions. The Oslo process came on the heels of the successes of the Ottawa treaty to ban land mines. There are 113 countries who have signed the convention and 84 have ratified.

The U.S., China and Russia did not participate in the process, and continue to have stockpiles of cluster munitions. Despite strong opposition from the majority of participating states and non-governmental organizations, Canada succeeded in negotiating into the final text of the convention an article which would explicitly allow for continued military interoperability with non-party status, article 21.

Earl Turcotte was the former senior coordinator for Mine Action at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, which are two very left-wing organizations. He was the head of the Canadian delegation to negotiate this convention. He also negotiated the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the Convention on the Prohibition of Anti-Personnel Mines, the Ottawa convention. It is significant therefore that Mr. Turcotte resigned as a result of Canada's attempting to implement weak legislation.

Mr. Turcotte joined many Canadians and our party in advocating for stronger legislation. He said:

—the proposed...legislation is the worst of any country that has ratified or acceded to the convention, to date.

It fails to fulfill Canada's obligations under international humanitarian law; it fails to protect vulnerable civilians in war-ravaged countries around the world; it betrays the trust of sister states who negotiated this treaty in good faith, and it fails Canadians who expect far better from our nation.

Imagine that: Canada's bill to implement the international treaty is the worst of any country and an epic failure in so many ways.

● (2115)

[*Translation*]

Of course, Bill C-6 goes beyond interoperability. The main issue is actually clause 11 and its vague list of exceptions. According to the Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross,

clause 11 would authorize activities that would undermine the purpose of the CCM and ultimately contribute to the continued use of cluster munitions instead of bringing about their elimination.

[*English*]

In its original form, the clause permitted Canadian soldiers to use, acquire, process or transport cluster munitions whenever they were acting in conjunction with another country that was not a member of the convention and to request the use of cluster munitions by another country.

At the foreign affairs committee, the NDP supported Canadian and international civil society groups in pushing for changes to the bill. We engaged closely with the government in public and thorough direct dialogue to encourage improvements to the legislation. We were successful in persuading the government to formally prohibit the use of cluster munitions by Canadian soldiers.

Clause 11 of Bill C-6 would go far beyond the language of article 21, and anyone from the international committee of the Red Cross to the Canadian responsible for drafting article 21 agrees on that. The Conservatives are alone in thinking that clause 11 is in line with the convention. The NDP amendment would have replaced this loophole language with an actual text of the convention. Without amendments to rectify these loopholes, Canada's commitment to ending the use of cluster munitions would be superficial at best.

[*Translation*]

We want to protect our soldiers from cluster munitions, to ensure that they are neither the users nor the victims. That objective is only possible if there is a full commitment by the entire country to the letter and the spirit of the treaty banning these weapons.

Until then, the convention allows interoperability. There is therefore no reason to use the overly broad wording proposed in Bill C-6.

[*English*]

Let me also cite the former Australian prime minister Malcolm Fraser. He said, “It is a pity the current Canadian Government, in relation to cluster munitions, does not provide any real lead to the world. Its approach is timid, inadequate and regressive.”

Indeed, Bill C-6 may even damage the convention as a whole by establishing an international precedent for opt-outs and exemptions. We need some good amendments to the bill to gain our support and the support of the international community.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the speech of the hon. member for Nickel Belt was a very eloquent on an important matter.

Government Orders

The member mentioned, again, the growing list of persons and nations who were concerned about the direction Canada was going in alleging that we were going to enact legislation to ratify the cluster munitions treaty. One of the many that stand out for me is the foreign affairs negotiator who negotiated on Canada's behalf at the international table.

I have had the privilege of working with some of these very high-calibre officials. They are used to sitting at the table, they are used to bending over backward and they are used to taking directions from the government. In many cases they may feel personally not just that the recommendation is reprehensible, but they do not think the wording being proposed will actually work. However, for one of these high-calibre officials to actually resign over the position of the Government of Canada is profound.

Could the member speak to the issue that even senior officials in the government's foreign affairs department have opposed clause 11, which the government members have insisted on keeping in the bill.

• (2120)

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, I quoted Mr. Turcotte already and, except for the members on that side of the House, we all agree with him. The man was working for Foreign Affairs and Industry Canada. Why the Conservatives do not even listen to their own people is beyond me.

Paul Hannon, the executive director of Mines Action Canada, said:

Canada should have the best domestic legislation in the world. We need to make it clear that no Canadian will ever be involved with a weapon again but from our reading this legislation falls well short of those standards.

The Canadian Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross stated that clause 11 would “permit activities that undermine the object and purpose of the convention and ultimately contribute to the continued use of cluster munitions rather than bringing about their elimination”.

We can see that it is not only the NDP that is against this legislation. Experts from across the world, people who are renowned across the world, are against the legislation. However, the Conservatives want to follow the U.S. They should grow a bit of backbone and sign this agreement.

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of quick corrections, and then a question.

The NDP members have quoted a couple of times now the number of Canadian soldiers who were killed or injured. I forget which year they were referring to. The facts are: IEDs: yes; suicide bombers: yes; cluster munitions: no, none, zero, nada. They should quit saying that. It is just not true.

The member for Repentigny suggested that somehow Canadians had left little Canadian flags on cluster munitions that we used in Bosnia. We did not use cluster munitions in Bosnia, at all. That kind of comment disrespects the soldier who he purports to respect, because it is just not true and it is reprehensible, frankly.

The members quoted the land mine treaty a couple of times. Why is there a clause in the land mine treaty that has the same effect as

clause 11 in Bill C-6? Why is it okay in the land mine treaty and it is not okay in Bill C-6?

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have finally shown up for work, after missing so many opportunities to discuss other bills in the House.

I want to ask the member a question. Why did 113 countries sign this convention? Are they all fools? Why did 84 countries ratify this agreement? Are they all wrong and only the Conservatives are right? I do not think so.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, there is, in fact, a substantial amendment that was made in committee that would remove the ability of Canadian Forces to use cluster munitions. However, we have still left far too much in that would weaken Canada's commitment to the cluster munitions treaty.

One of the places that I think is really offensive is that many of our allies have decided that, as an interpretative statement, in interpreting this part of the convention, subclause (c) of the operative section, that we are prohibited from assisting, encouraging or inducing anyone to engage in any activity prohibited by a state party under this convention. Many of our allies have concluded that investing in the production of cluster munitions would offend that section and have specifically taken action to ban investment. Bill C-6 would fail to do that.

We need to also focus on those places where it was so obvious we could have made changes, and refused to do so, to strengthen this legislation to make it fulfill the spirit of the convention.

• (2125)

Mr. Claude Gravelle: Mr. Speaker, I want to take this opportunity to congratulate the member from the Green Party, a party of two. They show up night after night, just to take part in this debate, unlike that side and that end, who have missed 111 opportunities to speak in the House of Commons since we have extended the hours.

To answer my colleague's question, she is absolutely right. There are a lot of things missing in the bill. There are a lot of things we could do to prevent kids, children, soldiers and civilians from being killed or injured by these bombs.

Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise in the House to speak in opposition to Bill C-6, an act to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions. I would like to begin today by making it clear that history will note that in this debate, on such a critical issue, we have not seen one government member rise and make a speech in defence of an indefensible bill.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: That is not true.

Ms. Niki Ashton: In fact, Mr. Speaker, I am being heckled right now by speakers who reject this notion, but we know very clearly that tonight it is New Democrat member after New Democrat member who has had the courage to stand in the House and call the bill what it is. It is a bill in which we see the government trying to hide an ugly agenda. A gaping loophole exists that would allow Canadian soldiers and Canada to sit by or work with countries that kill civilians through the use of cluster munitions.

Government Orders

It is no surprise that the Conservatives often have real issues digesting factual information. Just to be clear, and I know that this fact has been repeated on numerous occasions tonight, 98% of all recorded cluster munition casualties have been civilians. We know that the bomblets coming out of cluster munitions are small, often the size of a battery or a tennis ball, and have a failure rate of up to 30%. Unexploded bomblets, as they are called, become de facto land mines. One cluster bomb contains hundreds of these submunitions and typically scatters them across an area the size of two to four football fields.

Up to 37 countries and territories may be affected by cluster munitions from use in armed conflicts. Nineteen countries have used cluster munitions in combat, and 34 countries have at one point produced the weapons, though half of these have since ended production, some as a result of the convention. We know that in 2006, 22 Canadian Forces members were killed and 112 were wounded in Afghanistan as a result of land mines, cluster bombs, and other explosive devices.

In this House we have been able to bring forward the voices of internationally respected figures who oppose Canada's position. I would like to quote the former Prime Minister of Australia, Malcolm Fraser. Testifying before the parliamentary committee, he said:

If you want to kill women and children, cluster bombs would be the weapon of choice.

He urged Canada not to enable Canadian soldiers to use cluster bombs in joint operations with the U.S. military. As a result of clause 11 in this bill, we know that this is exactly the loophole that exists. Canada would now embark, as a result of this bill, on a journey that would see us collaborating with countries that use cluster bombs that would cause incredible civilian casualties and take away the lives of innocent people in countries around the world. All of this would be for what?

There are many days in the House when one wonders what the Conservative government's foreign affairs agenda actually is. We know that there have been deep cuts to our international development commitments. We know that every step along the way, the government has sought to prioritize its corporate agenda, assigning top advisory positions to corporate figures in the mining industry and the resource extractive industry, which have incredible sway over our international aid and international development dollars.

We know that Canada now houses about 75% of the mining companies around the world. Sadly, some of these mining companies do not even have production here in Canada, and many of them are complicit in human rights abuses around the world.

● (2130)

Many of them benefit from the services of Canadian embassies. Some benefit from actual investment through Export Development Canada, and many carry the reputation that as Canadian mining companies, somehow they are working to make the world a better place. In fact, we know that in country after country, particularly in Latin America and Africa, all that is happening is that Canada is getting a bad name.

This bill is no different. This bill serves to sully the reputation of Canada, a country that for years had built a strong reputation when it came to banning land mines, when it made commitments to peacekeeping, and when it came to commitments, under its foreign affairs agenda, explicitly to human security. These were not the ideas of just one person, although we certainly think of former Prime Minister Lester Pearson and others who were responsible for the vision of peacekeeping. These touchstones emerged as a result of Canadian values and the push Canadians made day in and day out. They were activists who fought for nuclear disarmament, peace, and solidarity to make sure that Canada was actually contributing to the well-being of people around the world.

Canadians are horrified and will be horrified to hear about the bill the government is ramming through Parliament, a bill that throws out the kind of reputation Canadians value, and a bill that would ensure that Canada collaborates with countries that know that the technology and arms they are using kill civilians.

It is surprising that the members of Parliament who sit across the aisle seem not to be concerned about any of this. We can see that from the fact that none of them are actually rising tonight to make a speech on this issue. They seem to think that their best contribution is through heckling in the House. What kind of defence could they possibly have to share with their constituents who wonder why their members of Parliament on the government side are complicit in ensuring that a bill that will see civilians die is rammed through Parliament without their contribution in debate, but obviously with their full support, as they vote for debate to be hurried and for this bill to become legislation?

I share the feeling of shame, frankly, that Canada would now be a country, as a result of this bill that includes clause 11, that would be complicit in these kinds of horrors. I would say to let history document that members of the Conservative government actively pursued an agenda that does not improve the lives of people around the world and that actively obstructs those, including former allies, who have worked with Canada in disarmament and on the ban of land mines. It is a government that is trying with great gusto to reconfigure the representation of a country that no Canadian will buy.

I look forward to talking about the government's agenda in the lead-up to the 2015 election. I am sure that their arguments, certainly in this area, when it comes to their foreign affairs agenda, will not pass muster with Canadians.

● (2135)

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not think any of us on this side have ever heard a speech by the NDP opposing an arms control measure with such an unbelievable claim attached to it. The member opposite claims that by passing the bill, we will be killing civilians. Could we on this side of the House register our incredulity, our absolute disbelief, at the absurdity of that claim?

Government Orders

The anti-personnel land mines convention, championed by Lloyd Axworthy, did not lead to the United States abandoning the use of anti-personnel mines. This convention will not, in the short term, lead to the abandonment by the United States, and others around the world, of using cluster munitions. However, Canada should do it. It should stand on principle and should have the member's support in doing so.

My question is the following. Will the member opposite, who talked about the deaths of children and civilians in Afghanistan due to American cluster munitions, acknowledge who killed the most civilians in Afghanistan? Will she stand in the House and tell us whether she even knows what has been happening over the past 12 years to the civilians of Afghanistan and who is responsible? I would like to ask the member opposite, who is the main belligerent responsible?

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, I realize that the minister across may have been quite busy in recent weeks denying the fact that he hung up on one of the most listened to radio programs in our country, recreating numbers that simply do not reflect reality when it comes to how many government sponsored refugees we have accepted from Syria, and coming up with excuses to reject yet more refugee claimants' health care applications.

However, just to inform the minister, he may want to familiarize himself with clause 11, which permits Canadian soldiers to use, acquire, possess, or transport cluster munitions whenever they are acting in conjunction with another country that is not a member of the convention and to request the use of cluster munitions by another country. This is clause 11 in Bill C-6, which is a bill that was put forward by his government. I would turn his passion right back at him and ask him how he, in good conscience, could stand as a minister of the crown and support a piece of legislation that flies in the face of the reputation Canadians demand from our country.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on the comments by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. He is quite right when he made the assertion that the Ottawa treaty, which banned land mines, did not get the U.S. to reverse its position. However, I think it is worth noting that the Chrétien government at the time demonstrated incredible leadership. In fact, through its minister of foreign affairs, it actually initiated it and turned it into a reality. In fact, the minister of foreign affairs at the time was even nominated worldwide for his efforts.

No doubt there is a need to see stronger leadership on this file. In looking over the legislation and some of the deficiencies, would she not agree that the leadership from Canada has been tarnished because of the manner in which the government has approached it? Let us keep in mind that the treaty itself actually came in as an initiative back in 2008. Here we are six years later, and the legislation still has not even been passed.

• (2140)

Ms. Niki Ashton: Mr. Speaker, it is clear that under this government, in terms of our foreign affairs policy and international development, the disconnect between what it is doing and how Canadians perceive our role on the international stage, or what our role should be, is incredibly vast.

I think of all the Canadians, my constituents and others across the country, who work hard day in and day out, who are raising families and contributing to their communities and our country. They want to know that what they are sending to the government in tax dollars and revenue is actually being spent properly. That includes the work we are doing overseas. Sadly, example after example coming from the government on its foreign affairs agenda proves the opposite.

Canadians would be horrified, the way we are in the NDP, that the government is willing to drive an agenda without proper debate, except for heckling, that not only stands by but that actually allows for a clause whereby Canadians would be complicit in the use of cluster munitions by others. That is unacceptable to us and unacceptable to Canadians. All Canadians deserve better than this government.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise and speak, for a few moments at least, to Bill C-6.

Let me say how proud I am to be part of a caucus whose members have been prepared to stand up, member after member, and voice their values, their principles, their convictions as they relate to an issue like this which affects people around the world. I am extraordinarily proud to be a member of this caucus.

It has been said before, but let me acknowledge the fact that this is a bill meant to implement or to ratify a treaty called the Convention on Cluster Munitions that was adopted in 2008. Here we are in 2014 and we are just now dealing with a piece of legislation to accomplish that, a piece of legislation, by the way, that was introduced in this House and now has had time allocation restrictions placed upon it.

This is extremely important. It is another treaty in a series of treaties followed along by the international treaty on land mines which is meant to deal with a weapon of war that not only has tremendous impact, death and maiming, at the time of its use, but subsequently as well. We have heard members of this caucus give examples of the problems that arise as a result of not being able to properly clear the fields of these ordnances and the destruction and damage that is caused to civilians, including children. That is what this treaty is all about: to end the use of a weapon like this that has been deemed to be reprehensible.

In fact, as the convention entered into force, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon spoke of “not only the world's collective revulsion at these abhorrent weapons, but also the power of collaboration among governments, civil society and the United Nations to change attitudes and policies on a threat faced by all humankind.”

Subsequently, a spokesman for the International Committee of the Red Cross said, “These weapons are a relic of the Cold War. They are a legacy that has to be eliminated because they increasingly won't work.”

Nobel Peace Prize winner Jody Williams called the convention “the most important disarmament and humanitarian convention in over a decade.”

The point is, this treaty was adopted by 107 nations around the world, and we are now dealing with a piece of legislation that supposedly implements that treaty.

Government Orders

I want to echo what some of my colleagues have talked about in comparing clause 11 of Bill C-6 with article 21 of the treaty itself. I have looked at this and I want to talk about it for a second. Clause 11 in the bill creates so many exceptions that it goes well beyond article 21 of the treaty and basically completely undercuts the intention of the convention itself.

I will read what article 21 says. It is pretty straightforward:

Each State Party shall encourage States not party to this Convention to ratify, accept, approve or accede to this Convention....

Each State Party shall notify the governments of all States not party to this Convention....

• (2145)

It goes on to say:

Notwithstanding the provisions of Article 1 of this Convention and in accordance with international law, States Parties, their military personnel or nationals, may engage in military cooperation and operations with States not party to this Convention that might engage in activities prohibited to a State Party.

In other words, this is the interoperability clause. In other words, the concerns that members opposite have raised, that my goodness if we are at war working with our neighbours to the south, the United States, or other coalition partners, if we do not have the exemptions provided for in clause 11, we might suffer some legal consequences.

What article 21 does is it provides that comfort that, in fact, we commit to the principle and we commit to not allowing domestically the purchase, production or use of these weapons, but that if we are engaged and make our coalition partners aware of our abhorrence to this particular practice, that gives us some safety.

If we go back to the bill, to clause 11, what we will see in subclauses (1), (2) and (3) are the exceptions:

11.(1) Section 6 does not prohibit a person who is subject to the Code of Service Discipline under...in the course of military cooperation or combined military operations involving Canada and a state that is not a party to the Convention, from

(a) directing or authorizing an activity that may involve the use, acquisition, possession, import or export of a cluster munition, explosive submunition or explosive bomblet....

(b) expressly requesting the use of a cluster munition, explosive submunition or explosive bomblet by the armed forces of that state....

(c) acquiring or possessing a cluster munition, explosive submunition or explosive bomblet....

(2) Section 6 does not prohibit a person, in the course of military cooperation or combined military operations involving Canada and a state that is not a party to the Convention, from transporting or engaging in an activity related to the transport of a cluster munition....

(3) Section 6 does not prohibit a person, in the course of military cooperation or combined military operations involving Canada and a state that is not a party to the Convention, from

(a) aiding, abetting or counselling another person to commit any act referred to....

My point is it is here in black and white what has been said by my colleagues and what has been said by experts who appeared at the foreign affairs committee, that in fact, clause 11 completely undercuts the tenets of the treaty itself.

If the government is going to get on its high horse and it is going to beat its chest about its adherence to the principles of the treaty, then it has to do that. It cannot expect to pass legislation that is contrary to that. That is the point we have been trying to make.

The production and use of these weapons is abhorrent. It has to be stopped. As a country, as a nation, as a participant in this world, we

need to take strong action. We need to show leadership. This bill does not do that. That is the point we are trying to make.

Why I would even bother to explain that to a government that has been passing pieces of legislation one after the other that are being challenged and thrown out by the courts, I do not know. I guess I am just a bit naive. I think that if we take the time and if we point out the obvious nature of the flaws, the government will see it.

It is important that this House uphold the tenets of the treaty, the Convention on Cluster Munitions. We need to make sure that the legislation that ratifies it does that very thing. Bill C-6 does not do that, and that is why we are opposed.

• (2150)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to add a few thoughts. We in the Liberal Party recognize that the Convention on Cluster Munitions got off the ground back in 2008. At the time there was a high sense of hope that countries around the world would recognize just how horrendous these cluster munitions can be and the cost to civilization. It ranges from all different demographics, from young people to seniors, and civilians in general. It is not just at the time when the munition is set off, but it continues on into the future. There is a heightened level of expectation.

My question for the member is with respect to the importance of when treaties of this nature are brought into being. Governments of good political will should be acting in a far more timely fashion in passing the legislation that is required in order to implement the treaties that are signed.

I would ask the member to provide his comments in terms of the timeliness of the government's approach in dealing with what is a very important issue to all Canadians.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right that timeliness is extremely important. I know the member understands that because his party has been wanting when it comes to timeliness on some key issues, for instance, the Kyoto protocol, a national daycare plan, Kelowna, and investing in education. These are initiatives that the Liberal Party talked about at various points over the past 20 years but never seemed to be able to bite the bullet and get them done.

That is where we are with the government. It has not been able to squeeze its conviction enough to be able to bring legislation forward in a speedy and correct fashion.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my colleague on his speech.

He mentioned that the exceptions went too far when it comes to Bill C-6. They are a clear breach of Canada's international obligations. In any case, when we sign a convention and the bill to ratify it is completely inconsistent with the content of that same convention, as it has been pointed out, it is impossible to have any credibility internationally. What does my colleague think about that?

Government Orders

• (2155)

[English]

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right. Not only has the government failed to deliver, but some nations and experts around the world have suggested that what the government has brought forward in a bill to ratify this convention is the worst they have seen. It is the worst of the lot. It may be the slowest, and it is certainly the worst. It undermines the government's credibility. It undermines all of our credibility on this issue and issues of international importance.

Canadians expect us to reflect their values, that we are a country that stands up for what is right, that we put our money where our mouths are, that we look after our neighbours, and when we say we will do something, we do it. This is not fulfilling that particular value.

* * *

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Before we resume debate, I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed the following bill to which the concurrence of the House is desired: Bill S-4, An Act to amend the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act and to make a consequential amendment to another Act.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for London—Fanshawe.

* * *

PROHIBITING CLUSTER MUNITIONS ACT

The House resumed consideration of Bill C-6, An Act to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions, as reported (with amendment) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have to confess that some of what I have heard tonight from the government during this debate makes me very uneasy. Here we are in the safety of Canada, talking about instruments of war, which quite simply are devastating. In some ways, the debate feels surreal.

As a nation, we took a position, in December 2008. We said, along with 113 other countries, that it was time to end the brutal legacy of cluster munitions and to launch a process to prohibit these weapons, to remove them from the face of the earth. They cause unacceptable harm to armed forces personnel and unspeakable harm to civilians. The reason I say this has to do with the impact of these weapons on human beings.

I began by saying how uneasy I felt and how surreal this discussion is, when it is academic, here in the safe comfort of this House, and when members of this House say we have to be prepared to accept the necessary evil of cluster munitions because our American allies have stockpiled them. However, before we rationalize the position taken by the Conservative government in Bill C-6, I think it is essential to understand what cluster munitions are and what they do.

We are talking about an imprecise weapon that is designed to strike a greater surface area than many other conventional weapons

by dispersing smaller but still very lethal submunitions. They are scattered around the ground, and these submunitions create an incredibly large footprint. Within that footprint, they kill and injure both military personnel and civilians.

Up to one quarter of these submunitions fail to explode on impact, but that does not make them any less dangerous. In Lebanon, during the 2006-07 conflict, there were at least 555 recorded cluster munitions casualties in Lebanon, of whom 122 were killed and 433 injured. Children made up 24% of the casualties, most of them young boys, and many of them under the age of 18.

These recorded totals do not include up to 175 unconfirmed cluster munition casualties during or shortly after the conflict. The unexploded ordinance continued to kill. For several months after the conflict, people could not go back into their homes because of these failed submunitions. They littered their homes and littered the area. In the longer term, a larger percent of casualties occurred to farmers while they were trying to farm, herd animals, or carry out other livelihood activities.

In addition to the loss of life and the economic damage, cluster munitions exact a high psychosocial and educational cost. Populations suffer psychological trauma long after the initial event.

However, Lebanon is not the only place where these weapons have been used. Cluster munitions are a worldwide generational problem. They have been used in 24 countries in areas, and their use is suspected in at least a dozen more. Cluster munitions have been deployed in Syria, Iraq, Israel, and are thought to have been used in Afghanistan.

Again, the victims are children who are playing outdoors, pedestrians walking down the street, workers pressing olive oil, and even families in their homes. These weapons kill indiscriminately. Casualties and deaths are estimated to be in the hundreds of thousands since 2006. We also know that 22 Canadian Forces members were killed and 112 wounded as a result of land mines, cluster bombs, and other explosive devices.

These are the weapons that pull human beings apart. In response to this, the Norwegian government invited 48 states, as well as the UN and civil society groups, to Oslo, to start a process towards an international ban. At the end of the meeting, 46 governments supported a declaration for a new international treaty, and a ban by 2008.

• (2200)

That declaration stated that a legally binding international instrument would be agreed upon by 2008, and it would “prohibit the use, production, transfer and stockpiling of cluster munitions that cause unacceptable harm to civilians.”

In 2008, Canada signed that convention, and the current government tabled that agreement in the House of Commons, in December 2012. That brings me to the debate tonight.

Government Orders

Canada, at this moment, has the opportunity to show leadership on the world stage by showing a real commitment to the Oslo Convention. Unfortunately, the sticking point revolves around clause 11 of Bill C-6. This clause relates to the issue of interoperability which, as part of the original convention, allows countries like Canada that do not manufacture, stockpile, or use cluster munitions to be in a theatre of war with nations that have not signed the convention, such as China, Russia, and the United States.

Unfortunately, Bill C-6 goes beyond even the interoperability allowed in the convention. Clause 11 establishes an extremely broad list of exceptions. The fear expressed by some who opposed the language in clause 11 was that this article permits direct complicity in the use of banned weapons. Imagine Canada being complicit in the use of banned weapons?

In other words, clause 11 allows Canadian Armed Forces to be in a theatre where cluster munitions are used. That goes against what we did in the land mines treaty. If we were in the theatre with any country that had not signed on to the Ottawa treaty, we would not be in joint operations with them while they were using those particular armaments.

The bill before us is void in that respect. There is a loophole, which basically says that we can be in joint operations in the theatre where one of our allies is using these munitions. This works against the whole notion and spirit of the convention.

As my colleagues on this side of the House have indicated, experts have expressed reservations. On the other side, members are not hearing; they are not listening. They are not, for all intents and purposes, even participating, except for the odd heckle and outburst.

On this side of the House, we have listened to the experts who have reservations. Dr. Walter Dorn, of the Royal Military College, said:

Who would want Canadians to use cluster munitions, aid and abet, direct or request their use, or conspire with another person to use these indiscriminate weapons? Yet this wording is in the legislation itself to allow the so-called cooperation with a non-party, which we know to be aimed at the possible cooperation with the United States.

As I said, it is against the spirit of the treaty and the letter of the treaty.

Dr. Marc Drolet, of Handicap International, said:

Bill C-6 should be strengthened to ensure that everything possible is done to promote the spirit and achieve the purpose of the Oslo Convention. [...] As currently drafted, the bill could, paradoxically, very well contribute to the continued use of cluster munitions rather than their elimination as intended.

As I said at the outset, cluster munitions are weapons that are designed to tear human beings apart. This Conservative legislation to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions is widely recognized as the weakest and the worst in the world. It undermines everything that we should be standing to implement.

We are going to push the Conservatives to further amend Bill C-6 and ensure Canada's humanitarian reputation is not tarnished by this weak legislation. Canadians should not ever be complicit in the continued use of these horrific weapons.

We are better than that. This nation is better than that. I implore the government to understand that Canadians want to be seen as

those who understand the Oslo Convention, who understand that we have a place, a possibility, an obligation, to make this convention work. It will not be with Bill C-6 and clause 11, but here in this House, through listening and co-operation, we can do it.

• (2205)

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague with interest. They keep saying that we are not participating in the debate. I am not sure what the heck I have been doing here for the last three hours, except doing that. Yes, there has been some heckling, in both directions. That is a feature of this place. However, we certainly have been debating it. Also, we gave a number of speeches during the last time this item was up for debate.

They have complained about not having enough time to debate it. We have given them five hours tonight. Like I said, they can debate their hearts out. If there were something new in each speech, that would be something, but the speeches are pretty repetitive, for the most part. However, that is okay. They should not be surprised when we ask the same kinds of questions.

The member talked about joint operations. I will point out that we did joint ops in Afghanistan, as she knows, with U.S. forces who were authorized to use land mines. There is a clause in the land mine treaty that allows us to do that, the same way that clause 11 in this treaty would allow us to do those kinds of operations in conjunction with the United States forces.

I will point out that all weapons of war are horrid. All weapons of war are designed to tear humans apart. That is regrettably what weapons do. Some do it by different methods, and so on.

However, we are already in joint operations with the Americans under the land mine treaty, with the same kind of clause that permits that. How is that different from this?

Ms. Irene Mathyssen: Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that the Conservatives have had no speakers. They have had no one stand up to provide anything but an across-the-House volley of interruptions and non sequiturs. I am afraid that does not constitute debate. There should be a give and take. There should be a clear and logical analysis of Bill C-6 and the rationale behind clause 11. From our perspective, it is extremely problematic.

He said that we have been in theatres with those who use objectionable weapons. We are better than that. We signed this Oslo Convention, in 2008. We signed it, I assume in good faith, with the intention of ratifying it, with the intention of showing the world that we could set aside these kinds of weapons, yet here we are with clause 11 in the bill, making excuses, undermining, deluding, and not living up to who we are.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, although the Conservative members in this House are not debating tonight, we are certainly getting a lot of points made repeatedly, such as those made by the hon. member for Edmonton Centre.

Government Orders

For my friend from London—Fanshawe, the claim has been made repeatedly in debate this evening that the exact language was used in the anti-land mines law as is used in Bill C-6. That is not correct.

• (2210)

Hon. Laurie Hawn: I did not say that.

Ms. Elizabeth May: That is what I heard, Mr. Speaker. If the member for Edmonton Centre could wait a moment, I have heard him say repeatedly in this House that the same language was used.

In fact, the language is very different. The language that is used in the anti-land mine convention and the law that was passed by this House, says the following:

participation in operations, exercises or other military activities with the armed forces of a state that is not a party to the Convention that engage in an activity prohibited under the subsection...if that participation does not amount to active assistance in that prohibited activity.

The question would be, if I were able to put a question to the hon. member for Edmonton Centre, is that if the same language were good enough for the anti-land mine convention, why did we not use that language in the cluster munitions law?

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, I am sure that I can speculate about why the change is here, but I am afraid the government has to answer for that. Unfortunately, it has refused to do so. It is not putting up speakers; it is not explaining its rationale.

All I can say, and all I can see, is the advice from experts, who are very concerned about the lack of solid and worthwhile language in Bill C-6.

We can change this. We can fix this. It is not too late. We can go back and work through the legislation and make it what it needs to be, for all of our sakes.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to join my voice to those of my official opposition colleagues.

We are opposed to Bill C-6 under its current form because it contradicts and undermines the international treaty it is meant to implement. That is unfortunate. We proposed amendments to the bill at committee stage, but, true to form, the Conservatives allowed just one small change. We are again trying to amend the bill at report stage, but if the government does not agree to further improve the content, then we will have no choice but to oppose it.

In November 2013, the NDP called on the government to amend Bill C-6. According to lawyers, representatives of other countries and groups from civil society, including the International Committee of the Red Cross, the new legislation would seriously hinder the implementation of the treaty. The Conservatives' bill to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions is largely recognized as the weakest and worst in the world. It undermines the spirit in which the treaty was created. These inhumane and cruel weapons must be banned. The Canadian legislation allows Canadian soldiers to continue to use these cluster munitions. It is unbelievable.

Canada actively participated in the Oslo process to develop a convention to ban the use of cluster munitions. The Oslo process came on the heels of the successes of the Ottawa treaty to ban land

mines. This treaty was very successful and we are very proud of it. I am talking about the treaty to ban land mines. We built on that treaty in order to rid the world of the horrific weapons known as cluster munitions. The convention was signed by 118 countries, which is significant since that represents more than three-quarters of the UN member states. A total of 84 countries ratified it. When the Dublin process and Oslo process negotiations were complete, we implemented a convention that was important in terms of disarmament and ridding the world of these horrific munitions.

The NDP fully supported the creation of a treaty to ban cluster munitions. This bill undermines the convention it is supposed to implement. That is unfortunate. We oppose this bill as it now stands. In committee, we worked hard to improve it with civil society groups. Even if the amendment the Conservatives allowed is an improvement, it is not enough for us to support this bill. At this stage, the best thing to do would be to completely remove clause 11 from the bill, which is what we are proposing.

I would like to quote the Canadian Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross. In their opinion, clause 11 would permit:

...activities that could undermine the object and purpose of the CCM and ultimately contribute to the continued use of cluster munitions rather than further their elimination.

Once the treaty is signed, it has to be implemented, and that takes legislation. This bill has been criticized by many experts and those who strongly believe in ridding the world of cluster munitions. The reason is clause 11 primarily, but also other provisions. Clause 11 allows the Canadian Forces to be in theatre when cluster munitions are used. That goes against what we did in the land mines treaty wherein, if we were in theatre with any country that had not signed on to the Ottawa treaty, we would not participate in joint operations with them while they were using those particular weapons.

This bill has a loophole, which basically says that we can be in theatre when one of our allies is using cluster munitions. That is unacceptable

At the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, the NDP supported the Canadian and foreign organizations demanding that the bill be amended. We worked closely with the government, publicly and directly, and were able to convince it to expressly prohibit the use of cluster munitions by Canadian soldiers.

• (2215)

Unfortunately, there remain flaws in the bill. If they are not corrected, Canada will only be able to superficially honour its commitment to ban cluster munitions. In fact, if Bill C-6 is not amended, it could even undermine the convention internationally, in that the withdrawal options and exemptions it contains could be invoked as precedents by other countries.

Government Orders

Canada should show more leadership and meet its commitments. The government has shown its lack of vision in other matters as well. In this regard, I will quote Malcolm Fraser, the former Australian prime minister:

It is a pity the [current] Canadian government, in relation to cluster munitions, does not provide any real lead to the world. Its approach is timid, inadequate and regressive.

I would like to remind the House that 98% of the victims of cluster munitions are civilians, innocent people, mostly children. That is why the world wanted to ban these munitions. Why is the government trying to destroy these efforts?

Moreover, in 2006, 22 Canadian Forces members were killed and 112 wounded in Afghanistan as a result of land mines, cluster munitions, and other explosive devices. Children and adults were maimed and killed by these weapons. We have wanted to get rid of cluster munitions for a long time.

The bill was also condemned by Earl Turcotte, the head of the DFAIT delegation that negotiated the convention. He resigned a few years later in protest against the Conservative government's watered-down version of the convention. Mr. Turcotte said that the proposed legislation is the worst of any country that has ratified or acceded to the Convention on Cluster Munitions to date.

Why is the government refusing to hear what the experts have to say? It is not the first time we have seen that. It is like *déjà vu*. On several key issues, the government turns a deaf ear. In this case, though, human lives are at stake, which is why I feel that the government should work constructively to amend the bill.

In an open letter published last year, Mr. Turcotte stated that the bill betrays the trust of sister states who negotiated the treaty in good faith. I want to conclude by quoting from an article by Marc Thibodeau in *La Presse* on June 15, 2013:

After playing a leading role in the fight against landmines, Canada is now being chastised for not fulfilling its commitments in the current campaign to get rid of cluster munitions.

In the same article, Paul Hannon, executive director of Mines Action Canada, says that there are no logical reasons to explain why Ottawa would act this way. He thinks that “the situation is tarnishing Canada's reputation as a leader on humanitarian issues”.

He really gets at the heart of what is becoming a very palpable reality: Canada's international reputation. We have to stop playing and start acting. We need to take a leadership role so that innocent people are no longer killed. We have a job to do. We can resolve this right now. We are here until midnight and we are trying to use this time to have a proper debate.

As was mentioned earlier, we are the only party taking part in tonight's debate. There is still time to amend the bill and delete clause 11. I am confident that we will be able to do something good with this bill.

• (2220)

Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to clear something up.

I think there was a translation problem earlier when I talked about Bosnia. I never said that we used cluster munitions. What I said was that when officers came back from Bosnia and talked about their

experience over there, none of them was thrilled about the prospect of using cluster munitions.

Does my hon. colleague think that people who join the Canadian Armed Forces are comfortable with the idea of using weapons that could kill civilians and children 5, 10 or 20 years after their mission in that country is over? Does she think that officers and sergeants would be interested in using such weapons?

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question and comments. This bill is really important, and Canada can take the lead on this issue.

It is hard to believe that six years after signing this treaty, we are here until midnight with almost no one else around, since the official opposition is the only party taking part in tonight's debate. We have to remember that lives are at stake. The victims are often very vulnerable people, civilians and mostly children. As a mother, I feel we can do a lot to improve this bill. It is not too late. However, we seem to be dealing with a rather thick-headed government that is not willing to acknowledge that it may have erred and that we can do better.

I am no expert in cluster munitions, but after reading the documentation and following the recent debates here in the House and in committee, I know that we can truly improve on the bill by deleting clause 11, and we would be saving lives.

[English]

Mr. Costas Menegakis (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have been listening to the speeches this evening from NDP members. One thing that strikingly is becoming more and more obvious is how repetitive the speeches are. I am of the impression that they have the exact same speech in the back on their computers and they change a few words, use the thesaurus and repeat the same things over and over.

• (2225)

Mr. Claude Gravelle: We're talking about the same thing.

Mr. Dan Harris: You've just repeated yourself in 10 seconds.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: What is interesting to note at this point, Mr. Speaker, is to hear the members opposite heckling, and boy have they been heckling tonight. Some of the words that have come out of their mouths have been totally unbelievable.

I would like to ask the hon. member if she has actually read the bill, or did she just take the speech from the back and bring it up to the front and read it again? The words that she uttered in her speech, Mr. Speaker, are almost identical to speeches we have heard from every member of the NDP who has spoken this evening. We all know the heckling we hear is coming from the NDP.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. The time is limited. I will send the question over to the hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

Government Orders

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau: Mr. Speaker, I am happy the member has been listening to our speeches. I hope he will take into consideration some of what we have said because it is important. I am sad that he finds it is repetitive. He is frustrated by the fact that we are stating the facts. If he is so frustrated, then, why does he not get on his feet and speak to the bill. He still has time. You could give a 10-minute speech like I just did. You have the right to do it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. We are out of time for this intervention. It is rather illustrative of the fact as to why our conventions compel members to direct their comments to the Chair. This helps the conversation to be less personal and invariably lessens the possibility of disorder in the House.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to Bill C-6.

This is a situation we know all too well in Canada. In order for an international treaty to be enshrined in Canadian law, an implementation act is required, and that is what we have before us tonight.

The issue with countries operating under the dualist model is that the implementation act could be undermined by weaknesses, omissions or even ill will. Unfortunately, we have heard time and time again that this bill is undermined by ill will. The government is deliberately misusing the process whereby international rules are incorporated into Canadian law.

We have already debated this bill, since the Senate introduced a previous version. At the time, the NDP had some concerns about the fact that it originated in the other place. However, I will refrain from launching into a tirade against the legitimacy of legislation that originates in the red chamber.

At first glance, it seems to me that every effort made by the government in terms of international relations tends to turn sour. It seems that the Conservatives could not care less about our relations with the international community.

To hell with other countries if they do not think much of Canada. Before the Conservatives start bragging again about their wide-ranging trade policies, they should ask themselves if other countries will want to trade with a country that behaves in such a cavalier and arrogant way.

Bill C-6 is very important. Unfortunately, the government waited too long before introducing a bill to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

I am not the only one who sees the major flaws in this bill. As it is, without any amendment, the bill would render Canada's signature on the convention null and void, simply because our law would not faithfully reflect the content of this treaty. We would clearly be renouncing our international obligations in front of the whole world.

The international community is aware of the efforts made by countries to enforce international laws and now sees Canada as a country that does not do the bare minimum. Clearly, this bill must be

amended in order to make sure that it is in agreement with the spirit and the letter of the convention.

I would like to talk about the Convention on Cluster Munitions, a treaty that has been signed by 118 countries—three-quarters of the UN member states—and ratified by 84 countries. The Ottawa treaty to ban land mines as well as the Dublin and Oslo negotiation processes laid the groundwork for a treaty such as this one to put an end to the horror of cluster munitions.

These weapons are extremely difficult to detect and disarm. They are tiny and often look like small objects that have been left behind in conflict zones. We can imagine the many victims, both adults and children, who survive but end up suffering and living with serious injuries caused by these weapons. It is disgusting to think that people could have conceived or produced these ghastly weapons, that companies could have distributed and sold them, and that countries could have authorized and ordered their use. The fact that countries continue to support their use is even worse.

Fortunately, the international community is trying to put an end to inhumanity. There have been a lot of consultations. The work done at the United Nations bodies in Geneva and Vienna is absolutely crucial and important. We mentioned the Ottawa treaty to ban land mines. The work done every year as part of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons is also invaluable, and Canada has always played an important role in the work of these organizations.

I mention this because I think it is very important to remember that Canada used to be an undisputed leader on these issues, and today, as I will point out later, a number of international experts are looking at Canada and wondering what is going on with us. Where is the logic behind these absolutely ridiculous policies? Once again, I do not understand the government's logic.

Let us get back to the subject of this bill. Cluster munitions were used for the first time during the Second World War. They were used until recently in countries like Afghanistan, Kosovo and Iraq. These weapons indiscriminately strike all those who happen to be in their range. The non-explosion rate of these munitions makes them particularly dangerous and horrifying. Thirty per cent of all cluster munitions do not explode when they hit the ground. Therefore, they could explode whenever a civilian gets near them, even years or decades later.

Civilians make up 98% of the victims of these weapons, and 40% of the civilian victims are children. Obviously, this is shocking and appalling. We are not talking here about injuries that last a lifetime; we are not talking about the material losses often inflicted on the poorest families that are already ravaged by war; we are not talking about the destruction of homes or the contamination of land used for agriculture; we are talking about the destruction of families, countries, economies and human lives.

In 2008, Canada signed the Convention on Cluster Munitions. It was only natural to do so, given the fact we have always been in favour of disarmament and of monitoring the use of conventional weapons and considering the humanitarian commitment behind our signature internationally, that is, up until now.

Government Orders

• (2230)

At that point, Canada made a commitment not to develop, produce, acquire, sell, stockpile, retain or transfer cluster munitions. It also made a commitment to destroy all cluster munitions in its possession within eight years.

By signing the 2008 convention, Canada also agreed to help victims of cluster munitions and support other signatories to the treaty. It was also to take all the necessary legislative measures to have the text adopted in its domestic law. That is what we expected the bill to do.

The NDP rejoiced when Canada became a party to the convention. However, we see tonight, with much sadness and puzzlement, that the government is choosing to shirk its responsibilities under the treaty.

It is choosing to act that way even though we offered to work with the government and suggest amendments, among other things, so that Canada could implement the convention effectively, as it promised to do in 2008.

Becoming a signatory to a convention is only the first step. Once an agreement has been reached and the convention has been signed, it needs to be implemented, which requires a bill like this one.

The bill we have before us, however, does not meet Canada's obligations. Bill C-6 is roundly criticized by experts as well as by those who believe that children and civilians should not be exposed to such weaponry.

Clause 11 allows Canadian soldiers to engage in operations where cluster munitions are used. We were fully compliant in the case of the Ottawa convention, which prohibits Canadian soldiers from being in theatre with non-signatory states. We were forbidden from participating in joint operations with states that use those weapons. Today, Canada is reversing its position in front of the whole world and agreeing to participate in operations in which cluster munitions are used. The decision is as inexplicable as it is worrisome.

Legitimizing the use of these weapons and the states that use them goes against both the spirit and the letter of the convention. Clause 11 authorizes Canada and a state that is not a party to the convention to use, acquire, possess, import or export cluster munitions. This flies in the face of the convention. The government's intentions are unequivocal, and it has made no attempt to obscure them. It is trying to circumvent a treaty that bans the use of some of the weapons most lethal to civilians around the world.

If we are to play a vital, valued role in promoting international peace, we need to make sure that this treaty meets international requirements when it is enshrined in Canadian law. That role was a Canadian tradition that many Quebecers were proud to be part of, whether as diplomats or statesmen.

The convention clearly requires that we completely rid ourselves of these weapons and refrain from using them if we are in a conflict zone or theatre of operations where they are being used. That is the commitment we made when we signed this agreement. It is there in black and white.

We can say that we do not have these weapons and that we will destroy them, but as long as we do not embrace this particular notion of not using them at all, we are not meeting our international obligations under this convention.

Numerous people have said as much. The Canadian Red Cross and the International Committee of the Red Cross said that clause 11 was not consistent with the purpose and the object of the convention. To quote them:

[It] would permit activities that could undermine the object and purpose of the CCM and ultimately contribute to the continued use of cluster munitions rather than further their elimination.

The parliamentary committee also heard from former Australian prime minister Malcolm Fraser, who is an international disarmament expert:

It is a pity the current Canadian Government, in relation to cluster munitions, does not provide any real lead to the world. Its approach is timid, inadequate and regressive.

Our amendments were specifically designed to change this bill so that it would be in line with such extremely important opinions and comply with international law.

Instead, the Conservatives are hurting Canada's reputation. It is shocking and shameful. I urge them to change their strategy, if only to preserve our international reputation.

Do they care about that?

• (2235)

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada was among the foremost countries advocating a ban on the use of gas on battlefields, while Syria used it last year.

Canada was at the forefront of nuclear disarmament efforts. Canada does not have nuclear weapons, but these weapons still exist. Canada championed the ban on land mines, but these mines still exist.

Is the member across the way telling us that banning cluster munitions will not be a major step forward in strengthening international security and protecting civilians caught in conflicts?

Does the member believe in our alliances at all? Does he believe that we must remain an important ally among NATO countries? Does he think that the United States must remain our ally, yes or no?

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, first of all, let me thank my colleague for his question. Of course, I am certainly not as knowledgeable as he is about international issues. I can tell you right off the bat that we can certainly see that this—

An hon. member: Oh, oh!

Mr. Pierre Nantel: What were you saying? I cannot see—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order.

It is important that all members direct their comments to the Speaker.

The member for Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher still has the floor.

Government Orders

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, I would ask those who have the nerve to grunt like a one-eyed monster to address the Speaker from time to time.

I was trying to provide an intelligent answer to an intelligent question. Essentially, what I was trying to say is that there are people on that team who have their brains in the right place, but unfortunately there are many others who have made their intention clear. My mother always said that what counts is intentions. When I hear people simply hammering the idea that Canada is not a pacifist country, then it is clear to see what their intentions are. I rest my case.

• (2240)

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I commend my colleague on his speech.

As we have been saying since the beginning of the debates on Bill C-6, it is clear that this situation is significantly tarnishing Canada's international reputation.

It is like someone giving their word and not keeping it. That is what we are doing if you consider clause 11 of Bill C-6. I must say that I am overcome by the fact that the government is minimizing the impact of these cluster munitions, which, whether the government likes it or not, kill children, women and civilians who have nothing to do with any army or with people involved in the military.

That is what we are talking about this evening. This truly goes to show that when it comes to a convention, applying it in a way that is inconsistent with what we signed on to, makes no sense.

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague very much for her informed comments.

We have to speak with a view to representing our constituents as much as possible. I am sure that everyone here was elected by people who are generally satisfied with their representation. Accordingly, I expect there to be a real parliamentary debate. It is indeed a shame to see that Canada's international reputation does not seem to matter much to the people across the way, or certainly not enough for them to take the floor and defend this bill.

[English]

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am not shocked and dismayed, because the Conservatives behave this way almost all the time.

The first thing I want to say is, is this really the single, most important thing that is facing Canada right now? The government decides that issues of trade with Panama, with Honduras, with Colombia are the most important thing and therefore we need to limit debate so we cannot talk about it any longer.

The Conservatives have done the same thing with the bill. They have decided that we are not going to talk about this anymore. They are done talking. In fact, members opposite are done talking completely. They have decided that their constituents' voices have now been heard by the bill, and that all of the members opposite, all of their constituents, how many of them voted for them, are now in possession of the complete truth, the facts, and everything else about the bill and there is no need to express their views. There is no need for those members opposite to express the wishes of their

constituents, because the bill does that for them. Therefore they do not need to talk about what their constituents might be saying to them. I think their constituents might be saying a lot. They certainly are to me.

Canada is a peaceful country. It always has been. When war happens and sometimes in faraway places, Canada responds to war efforts by other countries that require our assistance, World War I, World War II, Korea. We have been, regrettably, in Afghanistan. There were a number of Canadians soldiers who did not come back alive. In each of those circumstances, with the possible exception of Afghanistan, we were doing something for the greater good.

We are now suggesting, through kind of a sideways glance and loophole in a bill, that it is okay to kill and maim children, women, and other civilians who have no part in a war, that it is okay by our inaction on the bill, to build weapons and to use them, not by Canada, but by our allies, in theatres of war. Canadians can join in this war, Canadian soldiers can be part, wherever this war takes place. Our allies cannot expect Canada to tell them we are not going unless they stop using these particular weapons.

That is what we on this side of the House want to have happen. That is what we on this side of the House believe that my constituents want Canada to stand for. We want Canada to stand for the creation of a peaceful planet, not one where women and children have to fear that bombs will drop on them from the sky, and tiny bombs at that, bombs that are not designed as a weapon of war, but as a weapon of destruction of civilians.

The U.S. has become really good with their little drones that can go out and pick off an individual who happens to be a leader in another country. Maybe that is where weapons of war are going, to the individual hit, but this cluster munition is not a weapon of war. It is a weapon of destroying as many lives as it can. We might as well say that biological weapons are okay or chemical weapons are okay, as long as it is somebody else using them. As long as we are just beside them and somebody else is using them, then it is okay to use them. We will participate. We will join in with allies who use these things.

I do not think my constituents want me to take that position. I do not believe that this side of the House can support a bill that allows that to take place. It does not do everything, including refusing to stand alongside a country, even if we agree with the fight, if they intend to use these, if they have not signed this treaty.

We have, over the past century probably, discovered ways to kill people that we did not know of before, and we have used them in war. We are a pretty sophisticated species, we human beings. We have decided to put rules around war that limit the destruction to those involved in the war. Killing soldiers is okay. Killing children is not.

Government Orders

• (2245)

I am not going to get into a philosophical debate about whether war is good, bad, or indifferent, but we have developed a number of treaties and conventions over the past century or so that limit damage to civilians secondary to the cause of the war itself. There is a whole great long list of them.

There is the African Nuclear-Weapon-Free-Zone Treaty, the Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty that is designed to prevent one side from developing ways of stopping nuclear weapons from raining down on them, the Arms Trade Treaty that Canada refused to sign, the Biological Weapons Convention, the Chemical Weapons Convention, the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, the Convention on Cluster Munitions, which is the one we are talking about now.

There is the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty, the International Code of Conduct Against Ballistic Missile Proliferation, the Treaty for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America, the Limited Test Ban Treaty, the Mine Ban Treaty, otherwise known as the Ottawa treaty, because Canada had a lot to do with developing that treaty and actually hosted the convention. We saw land mines as being such a cruel and unusual form of conducting a war that we wanted the rest of the world to agree that land mines should be banned.

There is the Missile Technology Control Regime, the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty, the Treaty on Open Skies, the Outer Space Treaty, the Peaceful Nuclear Explosions Treaty, the Seabed Arms Control Treaty. There are about 15 more that have to do with nuclear weapons, which have been used on this planet, much to the shame of some of the scientists who discovered what they had developed.

We on this side of the House believe, as I think many in the rest of the world do, that if there are wars, we should limit the damage by those wars. Most wars nowadays are over oil, but most wars are over somebody's decision about where a boundary should be, as is going on currently in the Ukraine, where one country has decided to quietly feed a bunch of weapons to another group of people who want to take a piece of that country and move the boundary. War should not include the kinds of weapons that destroy lives without regard for the fact of whether a person is wearing a uniform or not. We on this side of the House believe that those kinds of weapons do not belong in anything that Canada does with its soldiers, period, end of story.

There is a personal message from my side of the House. My wife's cousin, who is a medical professional in Edmonton, has had first-hand experience with the effects of these munitions in third world countries. His job is to build prosthetics. He has spent several years of his life on the other side of the planet teaching doctors and others how to build prosthetics for children and how to keep growing those prosthetics as the children grow. It is a very sad, awful thing to have to do, but that is the effect of weapons like this. The effect is that children grow up without limbs and children need prosthetics in countries that do not have a lot of money to begin with. Are we sending prosthetics to these countries? No. Are we accepting refugees from these countries? Sometimes, but it is very difficult to get a straight answer out of the current minister on how many.

In general, we are glad that the Conservatives have actually agreed to ratify this treaty, but we hope that they would agree with us to remove the giant loopholes that we could drive a tank through and agree that our job should be to limit, not be a party to, the use of these weapons.

• (2250)

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague across the way for making the points he did. Because I do not see members of the opposition who are at committee, they may be unfamiliar with some of the nuances of the legislation, and the member made some errors. I would like to correct a couple of them.

One thing that needs to be made clear is that at committee, every party in this House opposed cluster munitions and the use of them at any point in any place. Words like “despicable” and “abhorrent” were used by all of us to describe these weapons and what they do. There was no one in that room who was in favour of using cluster munitions at any point in any place.

I should point out that Canadian troops have never used them and never intend to use them. Some of our allies, the United States in particular, have not signed the convention. That leaves an issue, because we have interoperability agreements with the United States, which means that our soldiers have to serve with theirs. The only exception made in this bill is to allow our soldiers to work alongside U.S. soldiers and not be caught in a situation where they are held liable for something they are not responsible for. Earlier today the minister used the example of Canadian soldiers who would fill a plane with fuel not knowing that cluster munitions were in that plane.

There are not giant loopholes in this bill. This bill has been put together to protect Canadian troops and to make clear our opposition to cluster munitions. I would like the member's comments on that.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, I respect the fact that nobody in the House wants anyone to use cluster munitions. What we are opposed to is the suggestion that we are not doing everything in our power, including refusing to have an interoperability agreement with a country that uses them. That is the step we are willing to take that the Conservatives are not.

Mr. Claude Gravelle (Nickel Belt, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the type of debate we have been having here in the House tonight was pretty evident just a minute ago when the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness came out of the lobby, yelled out a few insults, and went back inside. There has to be something in the water on that side of the House, and it is not chlorine. I do not know what it is.

The Conservatives have been saying all night that the speeches are the same, but we are talking about Bill C-6. They have to be the same. We would like to be discussing pensions. We would like to be discussing poverty, but we are discussing cluster bombs.

I would like to ask my colleague a question. If some major miracle were to happen, which would have to come from the PMO, and a Conservative were to get up and make a speech on this bill, what questions would he ask the member?

Government Orders

• (2255)

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, I wish I had the opportunity to ask members opposite questions on this, but they apparently do not want to get up and give us that opportunity.

If I did have the opportunity, I would ask if they were prepared to further amend the bill. The bill is flawed as it is now. It is, in the words of some, the worst implementation in the world of this cluster munitions treaty by any country that has signed it. We think it can be hugely improved, particularly in clause 11. I would ask the government opposite if it would be willing to consider thoughtful, reasoned amendments, including, perhaps, the ability of Canada to refuse, as we did on Iraq, to go to war with some of our partners if it meant being alongside a partner that was using cluster munitions.

[Translation]

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is quite late. We are here again this evening debating an important bill—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. There is too much noise in the House. The hon. member for Québec.

[English]

It is necessary to have order in the House. We only really have one more speaking slot to go before the end of the time allocated for this debate. I would encourage all hon. members to yield the floor to the hon. member for Québec.

[Translation]

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, you are doing good work, because we often get the impression that the members opposite do not hear us. Thank you for calling them to order so that we can have a constructive debate.

Throughout the evening, my NDP colleagues have been contributing to the debate and asking the government opposite to examine this bill more closely. However, my colleagues were the only ones who spoke tonight. We want the voices of civil society and the various organizations affected to be heard.

We are here to talk about Bill C-6. It makes sense that we are not talking about other subjects that I am passionate about, such as tourism and the need for investments in that area, consumer protection, and the environment and climate change. There are many interesting subjects.

However, we are here to debate Bill C-6. The House is sitting this late in the evening precisely to discuss this issue, namely, the Act to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions.

The NDP opposes Bill C-6 in its current form on the grounds that it contradicts and undermines the international treaty it is supposed to implement. That is really the key element. The Conservatives are going against the spirit of the convention by not agreeing to make the necessary amendments, as proposed by members of civil society, the NDP and the opposition in general. We should be hearing that they will agree.

We attempted to amend the bill at committee, but the Conservatives allowed only one small change. They did not make the necessary changes to the bill. This evening, we are once again trying to amend the bill at report stage.

If the government continues to ignore us and continues to fail to use its speaking time to respond to the points we are raising tonight in the House, obviously no progress will be made and we will get home quite late.

The Conservatives' bill to implement the Convention on Cluster Munitions is widely recognized as the weakest and, to be honest, the worst in the world. It clearly undermines the spirit in which the treaty was created.

This is not the first time the Conservatives have humiliated us on the international scene. The memory of the Kyoto protocol, which they up and ditched, is still fresh, as is the memory of the UN Security Council seat that we did not get because they failed to convey how important it was. They have made many mistakes. For example, the Conservatives rushed a whole bunch of free trade agreements through. They care a lot more about the number of agreements than about the quality of those agreements. To us, quality is important because those agreements are here to stay. It is important to do things right so they do not have to be redone and so we do not suffer the consequences.

The NDP collaborated with Canadian and international civil society groups to persuade the government to prohibit the use of cluster bombs by Canadian soldiers. The bill still contains a number of dangerous and useless legislative gaps. Bill C-6 has that in common with many other bills: loopholes you could drive a truck through.

The NDP will continue to put pressure on the Conservatives to amend Bill C-6, and that is why we are sitting so late tonight. We want to ensure that Canada's humanitarian and peaceful reputation is not tarnished by this very weak and mediocre bill.

Cluster bombs eject hundreds of explosive devices over a wide area very quickly. They have devastating effects on civilians that can last several years after the end of a conflict.

What we do now will have consequences for generations to come. As a young MP, that matters to me. My children and grandchildren will be affected. This is important, and we cannot treat this issue lightly.

• (2300)

It is important to understand the importance of our role here and the responsibilities we have for ensuring that generations to come have a better and much more certain future than the one that is facing us right now.

Canada actively participated in the Oslo process that led to the drafting of a convention to ban the use of cluster munitions. The Oslo process was initiated to take advantage of the success of the Ottawa Treaty to ban land mines. The United States, China and Russia did not participate in the process and are continuing to stockpile cluster munitions. In spite of strong opposition from a majority of the participating states and non-governmental organizations, Canada was able to negotiate the inclusion of an article in the final text of the convention that expressly allowed for ongoing military interoperability with states that are not parties to the convention, namely article 21.

Government Orders

Bill C-6 is not only about that interoperability article. The main problem actually lies in clause 11, as we know, which proposes a list of very vague exceptions, creating the legal uncertainty I mentioned. In its original form, clause 11 allowed Canadian soldiers to use, obtain, possess or transport cluster munitions in the course of joint operations with another country that is not a party to the convention, and to request that they be used by the armed forces of another country.

At the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, the NDP supported the Canadian and foreign civil society organizations calling for the bill to be amended. As I will explain a little later, those calls are supported by many organizations on the ground. We also worked closely with the government, publicly and directly, and we were able to persuade it to expressly prohibit Canadian soldiers from using cluster munitions. When you care about our troops, you do not turn your back on them. You are there for them, you defend them and you do not let them put their lives in danger. That is important.

Unfortunately, there are still other flaws. If they are not rectified, Canada's implementation of its commitment against cluster munitions will be rather superficial. In fact, if Bill C-6 is not amended, it could even be detrimental to the convention and give us a bad reputation on the world stage, in that the opt-outs and exceptions it contains could be invoked as precedents by other countries. We do not want a precedent that taints our reputation. We have paid dearly for that reputation over the years of our history.

In its current form, this bill is the least restrictive of all the laws passed thus far by countries that ratified the convention. That is why I would like to quote the people who support us. Earl Turcotte, former senior coordinator of mine action at DFAIT, was the head of the Canadian delegation that negotiated the convention. He also negotiated the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons and the convention on the prohibition of anti-personnel mines. Mr. Turcotte resigned to protest Canada's attempt to impose a weak implementation bill. That is saying something. Mr. Turcotte is advocating for stronger legislation, and we understand what he is saying.

It is important to say so. Some of my colleagues have already talked about Mr. Turcotte. When a person resigns, they understand that, in life, you have to have principles and you have to stand up for them and defend them. I hope that this will come to fruition. I remember other people who resigned as heads of certain government organizations. That is quite something. It means refusing to support this kind of thing because it betrays the spirit of the law, the mandate that we have given ourselves and the objectives we have set for ourselves. That is noteworthy.

Paul Hannon, executive director of Mines Action Canada, and former Australian prime minister Malcolm Fraser also support us. We have a lot of support. What we are asking this evening is very simple. We are asking the Conservative government, the Conservative members, the Liberals and everyone to take action and to listen to what we have to say.

● (2305)

[*English*]

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is one underlying current here tonight. I hope they do not actually mean it the way it comes across and that may be perceived by some as a vilification of the United States. There are no two greater friends, allies, and partners than the United States and Canada.

I would ask a very simple question of my colleague, and I would like a really simple answer. Because the United States has cluster munitions, because the United States has nuclear weapons and other weapons Canada does not own and would not consider using and opposes using, is the member suggesting that we should never operate with the United States and that we should get out of NATO and get out of NORAD because we are partnered with the United States? The message here is that we should never operate with an ally that has or could use those kinds of weapons. Are they suggesting over there that we should abandon NATO and NORAD because the United States is the primary partner in both those alliances?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Annick Papillon: Frankly, Mr. Speaker, that is all misinformation. It is ridiculous. I am not saying we should never work with countries like the United States or other countries. That is not what I am saying.

How can the government claim it wants to ratify the convention when it is in fact trying to undermine it? That is what I want to point out. The government is trying to undermine the convention, to avoid complying with it and to circumvent the rules once again so that it can do as it pleases without ever listening to the people on the ground or the experts.

Personally, I do not want to comment on more military points. I want to emphasize that it is important to listen. I do not understand why the government does not see that.

[*English*]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, in this triangulated debate, I would like to answer the question the hon. member for Edmonton Centre just asked.

I do not think any of us on the opposition benches who find the language of Bill C-6 objectionable are suggesting that we stop working with our ally and friend, the United States. We are asking merely that our legislation be as strong and committed to the goals of the cluster munitions treaty as other NATO partners and allies. Right now it is the weakest, and I think all of us find it shameful.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's comment.

In some cases, it would be good to look at what is being done in the United States. For example, take the free trade agreements that the United States has signed, as it did with Panama. If we had requested a little more information on security issues, and if we had imitated our American neighbours, we would have a much better free trade agreement than the one we negotiated.

Government Orders

Of course, we are prepared to work with people who show some common sense. That is what the NDP thinks. We should negotiate with those who comply with the spirit of a convention and the law, in addition to showing common sense.

● (2310)

[English]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Québec for her speech and commentary.

I have to say that I am sitting here feeling rather bemused, because the current government has castigated the United States of America all week, belittling its action on climate change, but all of a sudden, they are their best friend. It is good to hear them saying good things about the United States of America again.

I too, like the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, have actually taken the time to look at the Anti-Personnel Mines Convention Implementation Act. Contrary to what the members across the way say, the wording is nowhere vaguely similar. The Anti-Personnel Mines Convention Implementation Act simply gives an exception where participation does not amount to active assistance. Clause 11 in Bill C-6 would basically exempt anyone directing or authorizing the activity or expressly requesting the use of cluster munitions. I am sorry. There is actually no comparison between the two.

I wonder if the hon. member could speak to the case she has made that it is time for Canada to step up and agree with its colleagues in NATO that we should be taking the high road and should simply enact a law that mirrors the convention.

[Translation]

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, since I have little time left, I will conclude by saying that I support Mr. Hannon of Mines Action Canada when he says that Canada should have the best implementation act in the world. That is what we want, moreover. We must state clearly that no Canadian will be involved in the use of such a weapon again. The proposed bill does not really meet these expectations.

Why is the government trying to do as little as possible instead of striving to pass the best implementation act in the world? The reason why the New Democrats were elected was to make sure Canada had the best laws in the world.

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 11:13 p.m., pursuant to an order made earlier today, it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the report stage of the bill now before the House.

[Translation]

The question is on Motion No. 1. A vote on this motion also applies to Motion No. 3.

[English]

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 nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred, and the recorded division will also apply to Motion No. 3.

[English]

The next question is on Motion No. 2. 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 nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The recorded division on the motion stands deferred.

Normally at this time the House would proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded divisions at the report stage of the bill; however, pursuant to an order made on Tuesday, May 27, 2014, the divisions stand deferred until Tuesday, June 17, 2014, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

* * *

● (2315)

[Translation]

AGRICULTURAL GROWTH ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-18, An Act to amend certain Acts relating to agriculture and agri-food, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, obviously NDP members are the only ones working in the House tonight. I am very proud of them.

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I am very pleased to rise again to speak to Bill C-18, An Act to amend certain Acts relating to agriculture and agri-food. Before getting to the main part of my speech, I would like to mention that I will be splitting my time with my wonderful colleague, the member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. We are all looking forward to hearing from him.

The bill before us today is another omnibus bill, courtesy of the Conservatives. This is no surprise. We have become accustomed to their way of doing things. However they introduced a refreshing change. Even though the bill amends nine different laws—all the amendments are contained in the same document—they did something very unusual. For once, they focused exclusively on agriculture and agri-food. They seem to have learned something from the previous omnibus bills. At least this time around they have not presented us with a host of amendments that have absolutely nothing to do with the substance of the bill. It is an improvement and we hope the Conservatives will also improve the way they manage the proceedings in the House and the democratic process in Canada. However this will be the subject of another debate.

I will go back to bill C-18. This bill deals with various issues, from plant breeders' protection to the reinforcement of border security mechanisms, as well as increased access to the advance payments program. Therefore, this bill deals with several issues that are important to our farmers and, by extension, to our fellow citizens. This is why the NDP will support bill C-18 at second reading.

It is important to us that this bill be examined in detail. Indeed, even though we support some measures included in the bill, we believe that they should be studied in depth, as is often the case when the Conservatives introduce an omnibus bill, regardless of what they want Canadians to believe. Various experts have already given their opinion on this and are calling for amendments. The NDP thinks that we should take the time we need to hear them. We must invite experts who wish to speak on the issues included in bill C-18. As parliamentarians, we must also listen to the concerns of the farmers in our ridings to try and come up with the best bill possible.

As we all know, it is simply not in the Conservatives' DNA to collaborate, to negotiate and to look for improvements. Still, we hope that some of that may happen if the bill is sent to committee. This bill needs to benefit all farmers and producers, as well as all Canadians.

As I said, the NDP supports parts of the bill. A few provisions address the concerns of the people from my riding of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier. We are in a rural area with numerous family farms, spread over the Portneuf RCM, the Jacques-Cartier RCM, and the town of Saint-Augustin-de-Desmaures.

Constituents and producers often contact me to discuss agricultural issues. Access to funding is a challenge, as is probably the case in many parts of the country. I am sure that everyone in the House who represents a rural riding hears similar complaints from their constituents.

It is good to know, then, that Bill C-18 improves access to the advance payments program. This would make it easier for producers to access credit through cash advances. Accordingly, producers would be better able to meet all their financial obligations throughout

the year, while improving their access to cash. New credit options would also be available to producers whose farm is not their main source of income to support their families.

All of these important changes address my constituents' concerns. However, as I mentioned at the outset, we are dealing yet again with an omnibus bill.

• (2320)

Some of the measures it contains warrant some reworking. They would benefit from expert advice from people who really know the field and work in it every day. That is why we would like to refer the bill to committee. We would like to take the time to do the work we were elected to the House of Commons to do.

There is one problem that deserves to be revisited that I would like to see studied in committee. I am talking about the fact that this bill gives the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food more discretionary powers.

In fact, if passed as is, Bill C-18 would allow the minister to change various provisions of the bill without having to go through the House. He would not need approval from parliamentarians from all the parties. He could simply do it all by regulation. We see that provision quite often in Conservative bills. Frankly, this provision is a concern for the NDP.

This government has shown us many times that we cannot trust it. Here again, it is asking us to give it carte blanche, to give carte blanche to the minister who was at the helm during the XL Foods crisis, the minister who allowed major cuts at the Food Inspection Agency and who allowed the number of inspectors to be cut. The inspectors' jobs are to ensure the health of Canadians, to ensure that we all have access to high-quality food that is not contaminated. It is under this minister that the lives of hundreds and thousands of Canadians were put at risk during the XL Foods crisis. That caused panic here because the government was unable to guarantee the Food Inspection Agency the necessary resources to allow it to do its job properly.

Government Orders

Here again, with the bill before us, we are being asked to trust a minister who has shown his incompetence more than once. Frankly, this needs to be studied in committee again. We need to hear from experts on this aspect of the bill and various other aspects that are controversial and should be improved. We are not saying that we want this bill to be withdrawn completely or that it should never be passed. We are asking the government to show good faith and agree to work with members of the other parties. We also represent farmers, people who are familiar with the problems addressed in the bill, people who deserve to be heard as well as taken into consideration. They should be reflected in the bill that is passed in the House. If we pass Bill C-18 in its current form, that will not be the case.

Personally, when I travel through my riding, Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, no one tells me that ministers in the Conservative government should have more discretionary powers because they trust the government. I never hear that in my riding. Quite honestly, most of the time I hear how anxious people are for 2015 to come, so we can be rid of this government.

Aside from that, I have had the opportunity to meet with people from my riding and from ridings across Quebec and Canada. Canadians are worried about the decisions this government is making. It often makes unilateral decisions that do not leave room for opposition or constructive suggestions from the opposition. We know that our job is not simply to criticize. We also suggest solutions and improvements. That generally happens in committee and in the House when we participate in debates that no other parties participate in. We understand our job as MPs. I think it is unfortunate that the Conservatives take their jobs for granted. They do not feel the need to rise and defend their constituents. We saw that with the debate on Bill C-6, when all we heard was yelling from backbench MPs and the same question repeated over and over by the same hon. member on the other side. I strongly suspect that Bill C-18 will only be debated by New Democrat members who care about protecting Canadians and who want to ensure that we all have access to good quality food.

We are the only party that has proposed a global strategy to address the challenges facing farmers and food safety. No other party in the House has addressed this issue. The NDP's objective is to ensure that we can promote sustainable farming communities, support local agriculture, promote safety and transparency in the food protection system and make healthy food accessible to all Canadians.

• (2325)

That is what we want to accomplish here, and that is what we want to accomplish in trying to improve Bill C-18.

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on her well-informed and heartfelt speech. We can tell that she has people in her riding who are dealing with these issues. I was in her part of the country about two weeks ago, in fact. I visited Cap-Santé, which is a magnificent place.

It seems to me that she is in a better position than most to talk about what farmers are going through. I expect that issues related to

heritage seed saving and protection of varieties are of great interest to people.

Is this the kind of issue my colleague would like the committee to take a closer look at?

Ms. Éloïse Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by thanking my colleague for a very good question and his kind words about my riding. The people of Cap-Santé will be very happy to know that honourable colleagues like mine enjoy spending time in our lovely riding. Cap-Santé is indeed magnificent, but there are also 27 other municipalities in the riding of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier that I would encourage my colleagues to visit.

To get back to my colleague's question, this is a question that many people have been asking—not just farmers but people like me and like everyone here who eats food every day. They are worried about preserving our heritage seeds and all of the work that our farmers have done over the years. They want to protect that heritage and not leave everything to big companies like Monsanto.

My constituents are very worried about that. They are pleased with the NDP's efforts on behalf of all aspects of agriculture. A little earlier, I mentioned our comprehensive strategy for healthy, high-quality food for all Canadians. One of my colleagues recently introduced a motion to ensure that genetically modified organisms are labelled. All the work accomplished by my NDP colleagues is applauded by the people of Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier and of other rural ridings as well. They expect us to do the same work in committee in order to improve Bill C-18.

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I sincerely want to thank my colleague for her speech this evening. I know that she works very hard in her riding. She is a strong voice in the House of Commons. We are almost neighbours.

One out of every eight jobs is created in Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector. It is a truly important sector of the economy because it creates jobs in the regions.

I wanted to point out yet again that this is an omnibus bill. We support certain aspects of the bill but, once again, we have fears and concerns. A number of members from all parties in the House presented petitions about adopting the UPOV convention in 1991.

I want to know whether my colleague could comment again on the fact that this is an omnibus bill. Can we really trust this government and the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, who bungled a number of files such as XL Foods, listeriosis and grain transportation? Can she elaborate on this subject?

Ms. Éloïse Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for that excellent question.

Government Orders

To ask the question is to answer it. As we have seen, we cannot trust this government, and we can trust the minister even less. My colleague spoke about the various crises that Agriculture and Agri-food Canada has experienced since 2011 alone. This government has been in power for far too long, and that is not the first crisis we have faced.

Giving more discretionary power to this government and to the current minister is ridiculous. He has demonstrated his incompetence on more than one occasion. I recently heard him direct some absolutely disgusting comments to my colleague from Alfred-Pellan in response to one of her questions. This colleague represents a riding that is both rural and urban, and he did not seem to get that at all. If he does not understand that, I do not see how he could logically and sensibly exercise the discretionary powers that he would have under Bill C-18. I hope that we can review this provision and amend it as quickly as possible.

• (2330)

[English]

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier for sharing her time with me. With respect to the work she has been doing on this and other issues in her constituency, she easily could have spoken for the full time. Therefore, I appreciate her sharing that time with me.

I am pleased with the work the critics for our caucus, the MP for Welland and the NDP for Berthier—Maskinongé, have done on this file. They have done an absolutely tremendous job.

I will spend a few minutes of my allotted 10 minutes speaking about the leadership they have shown on the whole question of a pan-Canadian food strategy, how important it is for our country and how proud I am as a member of this caucus to have those two critics working on this file.

Let me speak for a minute about Bill C-18. As has been said, it is an omnibus bill but, lo and behold, all of the nine bills it would affect actually have something to do with agriculture, which is unique. Usually we see omnibus bills from the government that cover everything from soup to nuts and have nothing to do with each other. There is no connection whatsoever, no matter how much of an imagination one has. However, this one does.

That having been said, it is very complicated. There are some issues in here with which we agree. Some issues like the plant breeders' rights, farmers' privilege and issues like that are not without controversy. People are concerned with the whole question of how much money would be taken out of the pockets of farmers at the beginning and the end of the day. We need to hear more about that issue.

Other issues, like the advance payments program, that come under the Agriculture Marketing Programs Act are good ideas. However, we look forward to the bill getting to committee so it and our critics can consult with Canadians about what we need to do to ensure the bill would be a benefit to farmers and would benefit food production in our country, rather than be a detriment.

Since the Conservatives have come to office, we have lost over 8,000 small farms in our country? Imagine that. It is phenomenal.

I am from Nova Scotia. I spent a great deal of my young life, from the age of nine up until my early twenties, working on farms, a lot of that time in the fruit tree area. That is an area which Nova Scotia has become well-known, not only across the country but around the world, for our ability to identify not only new technologies in variety, but also in planting, harvesting, marketing apples, in particular, and other areas.

I am very concerned with the direction that the current and previous governments have gone in this area. That is why I am so pleased and proud that my colleagues have come forward with a pan-Canadian food strategy. We call it "Farm to fork". If anyone is interested in taking a look at it, they can go to my website or to my Facebook page, or they can go to NDP.ca to take a look at that and sign a petition.

• (2335)

We should be ashamed of the fact that Canada is without a comprehensive food policy. We are lagging behind other industrialized countries in the OECD, like England and Australia. The United Nations itself has raised serious concerns about food security in the aboriginal community and the lack of a coordinated food strategy in this country.

New Democrats have picked up on that. We recognize that there is a problem. We recognize that there is a lack of vision. We have come forward with a strategy that deals with our food system, one that connects Canadians from the farm to the fork. We are calling on the Government of Canada to implement a pan-Canadian food strategy that would do the following: promote sustainable agricultural communities, support local agriculture, foster thriving agricultural businesses, ensure safety and transparency, and make healthy food accessible to all Canadians. It is about leadership and it is something that we need to do to move forward.

I am looking forward to sharing some of the aspects of this piece of legislation with my friends and former colleagues in Nova Scotia to get some of their insight into this. I will be interested in listening in on some of the hearings that will be held probably next fall, maybe sooner. The committee might do a cross-country tour over the summer, but I am not sure.

Canadians are interested in farms, food production, the kind of resources that farmers have available to them, and the whole issue of food security in aboriginal communities, coastal communities, and smaller communities throughout this country. Urban Canada will have an opportunity to participate in this and provide input. People will be able to look closely at the pan-Canadian strategy that we introduced and will be talking about. I will be talking about it with the people of Dartmouth—Cole Harbour. I will certainly share it with people throughout Nova Scotia.

This is an important but complicated piece of legislation. It would bring together nine pieces of legislation. Let me go through those nine pieces of legislation: the Plant Breeders' Rights Act, the Feeds Act, the Fertilizers Act, the Seeds Act, the Health of Animals Act, the Plant Protection Act, the Agriculture and Agri-Food Administrative Monetary Penalties Act, the Agricultural Marketing Programs Act including transitional provisions, and the Farm Debt Mediation Act.

Government Orders

These are important issues. We would like to see the government make these issues clearer to Canadians. We would like to see the government connect the dots. A pan-Canadian food strategy would present a vision to Canadians, to farmers, and to people concerned about food security. Canadians would be able to better understand the philosophy behind all of this legislation and the regulations as they affect the farming sector and the whole question of food security.

This is an interesting omnibus bill. It is not like the ones that I have talked about before that the government has presented. It all ties together but it is complicated. I look forward to Bill C-18 going to committee where it will be examined and many Canadians will have an opportunity to provide their input.

• (2340)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my honourable colleague's speech.

With regard to Bill C-18, I would like to commend the Quebec chapter of Friends of the Earth with whom I participated in a protest on May 24. The purpose of this protest was to give people an opportunity to express their concerns about this bill.

This omnibus bill contains many components. We strongly denounce this Conservative tactic because this is another bill that contains so many measures that it is impossible to break it down and identify which elements we can agree with and which ones we cannot. I deplore the fact that the Conservatives are once again introducing an omnibus bill.

I was listening to my colleague and I was wondering what he thought about the Conservatives' approach. They have done this several times. They introduce an omnibus bill containing a large number of measures rather than taking the time to break it down in such a way that we can come up with the best bill possible.

If we need to split the bill into a number of different parts, we should do so.

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, my colleague is absolutely right that there are parts of the bill that have caused some concern among people in the industry.

It is an omnibus bill. There are, as I said, nine pieces of legislation in it. There are some things that we like and some things that we do not like. There are other things that we do not understand, and we will need to consult.

My point is yes, it is an omnibus bill, but at least all of the parts tie together somehow, which is different, which is unique. Usually with the omnibus bills that the government brings in, one part does not have anything to do with the other part. They include everything from soup to nuts, is the expression I use.

The bill is complicated. It does have to be examined very carefully. We do have to make sure that people in our constituencies concerned about food security, concerned about food production, have the opportunity to have their say.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech and for the work that he does in the House and in his riding.

Had a member opposite made a speech, what question would my colleague have liked to ask him or her about Bill C-18?

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, let me say how much I appreciate the kind words from my colleague.

There are a couple of questions I would ask my colleagues opposite, if they were ever to rise to their feet on an issue like this. There are some issues around the whole question of planters' rights that affect research. There is a question of whether small farmers in particular will have access to the research and the support to be able to do research themselves on plant variety and other things.

What confidence can we have in the government and in the minister that the resources will be put in place, whether that be Agriculture Canada or CFIA? What confidence can we or small farmers out there have that the government will back up what it is saying about providing the necessary resources?

It is a key question I have and will continue to have, and I am sure my colleague, the agriculture critic from the NDP, will be able to put that question forward.

• (2345)

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak today about Bill C-18, an act to amend certain acts—there are nine of them apparently—relating to agriculture and agri-food.

I heard someone across yell out the word “constituents”, and I do have a number of constituents. Not very many of them have to do with agriculture and agri-food. However, I am surprised because I do know there are a number of members opposite who represent large rural ridings in Saskatchewan and Alberta, and yet they are not speaking on this bill. Do their constituents not wish their members of Parliament to speak on their behalf?

What is going on here? It seems rather strange. If I represented a number of farmers, which I do not, I would want to speak on their behalf on a bill as important as this one. I am going to say that this bill is important, and there are a number of good measures in this bill that we support. There are some problems with it.

However, before we get into the issues that we do and do not support, I want to say that this past weekend, I attended the grand opening of the Weston farmers market. It is a place where farmers gather in my riding, directly across from my office in fact, to sell, and they have done this for the past 32 years.

Government Orders

This farmers market is probably one of the most successful around. There is no cover. There is no shelter. It is a parking lot in the old town of Weston. A number of farmers descend on it, and they are literally picking the night before. These are farmers from all over southwestern Ontario, who come to the riding with the freshest of produce, the freshest of eggs, butter, fruit, vegetables, flowers, and more. There are bakers, coffee makers, and the whole gamut of people who come to a farmers market. Grandpa Ken, who sells back bacon on a bun every morning is a hit. Obviously he gets his back bacon from a pig farmer somewhere in southern Ontario.

The point is that these farmers are successful because they are able to turn their products into money. That is really what is going on; they are earning cash. However, part of this bill sometimes makes it more difficult for farmers to turn their products into money and to survive. That is one of the reasons we want to examine this bill very carefully.

We would hope that the Conservatives would be willing to support amendments to this bill, so that we can fix the problems we find with it. That is one of the reasons we have this debate, so that we can express what we feel are the problems with this bill, and we can hear from the other side what their arguments might be to suggest that we are reading it wrong and that it means this.

We do not hear any of that from the other side. We hear some rumblings and some mumblings, but not a heck of a lot of articulate debate from that side of the House.

My riding is an urban riding. It is a very poor riding. One of the features of my riding is that food security is a very serious problem. There is an organization called Frontlines, which is run by the Baptist church, and it is spending a lot of its time teaching 10- and 11-year-old boys how to cook for their families because they are the primary caregiver of a family.

Now, that is heartbreaking when we realize that is who is doing all of the cooking. We have a system in this riding where people teach these kids how to cook. They cannot teach them how to have more money to buy better food, but we are trying. We are trying with a number of organizations that have created small market gardens in the riding. There are individuals who—

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Somebody get the guy some notes.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, does the member want my notes?

• (2350)

There are individuals who are planting in allotments all over the riding, and they are growing. In fact, they are growing by leaps and bounds. However, this bill might actually get in the way of some of that, particularly if some of the seeds that people are using become more expensive as a result of that—

Mr. Chris Warkentin: How is that?

Mr. Dan Harris: I see one of them finally woke up.

Hon. Chris Alexander: How do you feel about GMOs?

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, yes, they woke up.

Another issue is raised in this bill, which is the financial ability of CFIA to monitor and enforce the regulations and the legislation that

it is being given. I would like to give members an example from my riding of what I believe is a failure of CFIA.

We hear a lot of failures of CFIA in terms of the use of contaminated in meat in Canada. We have heard of some other failures of CFIA—

Mr. Chris Warkentin: Thank you for bringing the notes.

Mr. David Anderson: There they go.

Mr. Costas Menegakis: Just hot off the printer.

Hon. Chris Alexander: Hand delivered.

Mr. Chris Warkentin: You will get onto the right bill eventually.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. I know the day is getting on, but the Standing Orders do require that only one member at a time have the floor. There is a reason for that. It is so that other hon. members will have the opportunity to hear what the member who has been recognized has to say.

The hon. member for York South—Weston.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention a little organization called Aidan's Gluten Free, which is in my riding. It uses seeds and grains from all over Canada, and probably from all over North America. They are combined in a way that makes bread that is tasty but has no gluten in it. Aidan sells this product, which is assembled in his little factory, to grocery stores and they sell it to the public because it is fresh. This bread is baked fresh every day in his factory, and it is delicious.

However, the CFIA has allowed the big commercial operators like Sobeys, Loblaw's, and Metro to now bake bread in Chicago, freeze it, and ship it to the stores in Toronto. They take the frozen bread, put a best before sticker on it, put it on the shelf, and call it fresh. They leave the bread frozen maybe for weeks, maybe for months. The CFIA apparently thinks that this is an okay practice.

Mr. Speaker, I am not sharing my time, so I was going to continue right until—

• (2355)

Mr. Chris Warkentin: More.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, before I was interrupted, my point was that the CFIA does not have the resources to properly police material now and to properly keep things fair and honest in our system. We now have a system in which a bread manufacturer in the United States is allowed to ship frozen product into Canada, then have it labelled as fresh, put it on the store shelves, and the CFIA says that it is okay. What I think is happening is that the CFIA is not paying attention. This is not a fair position to take.

We note that the biggest bread maker in Toronto was recently sold to a Mexican operation. We wonder if this is not the precursor. Instead of making the product in our own city, taking grain from the Prairies and from those farmers, grinding it into flour and baking bread in Toronto, we are going to start making the bread in Mexico, shipping it to Toronto and calling it fresh, even though it was frozen long ago.

That is the concern, but the CFIA does not seem to have the resources to manage even that operation—

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Mr. Robert Chisholm: Can you tie the free trade agreement into that?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I would just let the hon. member for York South—Weston know that in fact, at the end of the intervention by the hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, we actually surpassed the five hours after the first round of debate on this particular question, in which case there are only 10 minutes for speeches and thereafter five minutes for questions and comments. We have had a couple of interruptions, so I will let the hon. member have another minute to finish his remarks, and then we will go to questions.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, I actually have experience making genetically modified seeds the old fashioned way, by cross-pollination. Members may have heard of Funk's G hybrid. There are signs all over southwestern Ontario for Funk's G hybrid. As a youngster, for 90¢ an hour, I ran around pulling the tassels off two of the rows so the other 10 rows would be pollinated by themselves. It was an awful, back-breaking job, but 90¢ an hour was a lot of money in those days. That is what we did to make a grain that was capable of being a feed grain for the following season. It was a great system. I highly recommend farm work to anyone here.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me the extra time to continue to wrap it up.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It would appear that we do have time for at least one question and response.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Edmonton Centre.

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I know my colleague is from an urban riding, so I would just like to ask a question on behalf of all the farmers in Edmonton Centre, and I do not say that totally facetiously. There are actually farmers in Edmonton Centre, or certainly farmers' markets.

We heard a lot of interesting chat, and it was entertaining. I realize that I am throwing him a lob at midnight. Does the member have one specific amendment he would like to make to the bill to make it better?

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, our concern is that CFIA does not have the resources now to do the job properly, and there is nothing in the budget, nor in the bill, to indicate that CFIA would be given the resources to properly manage and monitor the implementation and the regulations required for the bill.

There are a lot of good things in the bill that we agree with and that we want to see continue, but if CFIA does not have the resources to manage the bill in the future, and the example I gave was on how it does not have the resources now, then there is nothing in the bill that can be done about that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We actually have time for one more short question. The hon. member for Berthier—Maskinongé.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his very interesting speech. I learned a lot, and I would like to point out how important it is that we have a proper debate.

Since Bill C-18 was introduced, the hon. member for Welland and I have been holding many consultations on the bill. It is very important to consult people.

Bill C-18 will put more power into the hands of the minister so that he can make changes without consulting Parliament. Does my colleague have any concerns about that? Does he trust the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food?

I would like to hear his comments.

• (2400)

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Berthier—Maskinongé and the member for Welland for the great work they have been doing to keep all of us informed and to keep the farmers in our country on the right track.

Yes, I am very concerned any time power is concentrated in the minister. We have seen it over and over again with the Minister of Citizenship and the minister of human resources, and now we are giving direct power to the Minister of Agriculture.

We in Parliament think there should be proper parliamentary oversight of decisions like that.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, three months ago, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights visited the Central African Republic, or CAR, and condemned the slow response of the international community. She asked, "How many more children have to be decapitated, how many more women and girls will be raped, how many more acts of cannibalism must there be, before we really sit up and pay attention?"

Thus far, over 140,000 people have been killed in CAR. Eighty per cent of the Muslim population has been driven from their homes or murdered. The fighting has left 2.5 million people, the equivalent of Vancouver's population, needing humanitarian aid. The children of CAR have witnessed and continue to witness terrible violence, maiming, killing. The number of children being treated for severe malnutrition in the capital has tripled since January. This year, UNICEF and partners have already secured the release of more than 1,000 children from armed groups, or more than five times the number of children released in 2013.

Throughout the country, violence has escalated in plain sight of diplomats, foreign observers, peacekeepers and the world's media. When speaking of CAR, a doctor from Médecins Sans Frontières noted that the people there "don't die of bullets; they die because of a lack of will to help them."

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For too long, the international community has sat idly by and watched atrocities unfold in CAR rather than assisting and supporting this failed state and making a long-term commitment to create a functioning, responsive and accountable security sector, a proper army and police force, and building a functioning justice system alongside other essential public institutions.

On April 10, 2014, the United Nations Security Council at last adopted a resolution to authorize the establishment of a UN peacekeeping operation of almost 12,000 by September 2014 to build on the work of the African Union-led international support mission in CAR, French forces and the EU forces that have joined them.

I ask the government, is the number and kind of peacekeepers enough? Is September too late for these forces to make a significant difference? Where has Canada's voice gone on the responsibility to protect?

For five months, I have repeatedly asked the government what more it could do to provide humanitarian aid, reduce the violence, rebuild civil society and support peace and reconciliation in CAR. We have repeatedly asked about Canada's potential participation in the UN peacekeeping mission in CAR.

On May 16, when I again asked in Parliament whether the government would provide peacekeeping support in line with our capabilities, the parliamentary secretary seemed to signal movement, but remained troublingly vague in saying, "Canada has been contributing, and we will continue to contribute, to the United Nations for peacekeeping forces for the Central African Republic."

Will the parliamentary secretary confirm tonight whether Canada will provide such peacekeeping support, and what kind? Blanket statements of support are not helping the children of CAR.

• (2405)

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to be here early in the evening like this.

The situation in the Central African Republic is deeply disturbing for Canada and for Canadians. The Central African Republic is a country where religions once coexisted in peace and mutual respect. It is troubling to see how quickly this situation has deteriorated into conflict and violence.

To this day, the looting, rapes, and indiscriminate killings continue. Sadly, more than one million people have been forcibly displaced as a direct result of violence.

This situation must stop. Canada has strongly condemned the violence in the Central African Republic, and urged all parties to exercise restraint and to end the cycle of violence. The government has supported international efforts to stop the conflict, promote the protection of civilians, and to help the most vulnerable have access to life-saving assistance.

For example, last December, our country was the first country to contribute to the UN trust fund in support of the African Union peace mission in the Central African Republic, or MISCA, as it was called. The government gave \$5 million to support African Union troops

with vital communications equipment to enable them to accomplish their missions and help the people of the Central African Republic.

Since the start of 2013, Canada has contributed over \$23 million for humanitarian assistance. This assistance is providing food, water, sanitation, health care, and protection services to those most in need. We are also funding air transportation, so that humanitarian workers are able to get safely in and out of remote and insecure regions of the CAR where people are in the most desperate need of help. In sum, through our financial assistance, Canada has been making a difference, especially in the lives of those most vulnerable.

As colleagues in the House are aware, the United Nations Security Council agreed, in April, to create a UN mission to replace MISCA in September 2014. My colleague was speaking to that. This new mission, called MINUSCA, has a broad mandate, which includes the protection of civilians, support for a political transition, support for humanitarian assistance, and the promotion and protection of human rights and the rule of law.

The UN team was recently on the ground in the Central African Republic to finalize the operational planning for MINUSCA. Based on this recent assessment, the UN will begin to ask member states to support the specific needs of this mission. Based on these needs, our government will decide on how Canada can best contribute to that mission.

As we have already stated publicly, Canada will not be sending companies or infantry troops of the Canadian Armed Forces. However, there are other ways in which we can and will support the UN mission and the overall objective of ending the conflict in the Central African Republic. As we did when the EU mission was established in December, the government will respond expeditiously in support of the new UN mission.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan: Mr. Speaker, we look forward to hearing how the government will support the United Nations peacekeeping mission in a substantial way.

Will the government provide additional non-budgetary assistance beyond its assessed and financial contributions? Will the government provide airlift assistance, as it provided to efforts in Mali, and other resources, as these could make a substantial difference on the ground?

Our allies, and not just France, but the U.K. and the U.S., are stepping up by taking a more active role in the CAR. For example, Germany has authorized the deployment of up to 80 troops, air transport, and a hospital plane to support the EU efforts. It has ruled out the use of German forces in combat.

Will Canada send specialized military assets, and will it help to build the capacity of francophone African peacekeepers as we did in Mali? Will Canada uphold the responsibility to protect?

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, I know everyone in this House is concerned about the situation in the Central African Republic. While the roots of this conflict are not religious, rebel groups and rival factions have been able to use religion to promote inter-communal hatred and violence.

Adjournment Proceedings

The rampant human rights abuses and the extrajudicial killings must stop. The Government of Canada has not been silent. We have taken action. We have condemned the violence. We have been an important source of humanitarian assistance, and we have supported African troops under the MISCA banner.

The member opposite will be glad to hear that we will continue to support international efforts to stop the violence in the Central African Republic, and I am sure that we can count on the support of every member of Parliament.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, climate change denial is deeply embedded in the Conservative government's DNA. This explains the government's inertia on the issue at a time when our major trading partner, the United States, is signalling its intent to seriously address climate change, but I will not discuss GHG emissions this evening. I will not be talking about the causes of climate change and the need to do our part to address them. Rather, I will be talking about the impacts of climate change and the urgent need to mitigate or adapt to those impacts by upgrading our municipal infrastructure.

Climate change's bottom line is its devastating impact on water. It is becoming increasingly obvious to anyone who follows the news headlines that climate change is wreaking havoc, through more frequent and intense floods and droughts, on communities, the economy, and the environment. Our municipal storm sewer systems are not necessarily equipped to absorb the torrential rains we are experiencing on a more and more frequent basis. They were not built to receive such large quantities of water over such short periods of time.

Many of our older storm sewer systems are not separate from sanitary sewer systems. Both systems are combined. This means that when too much rainwater enters the system, it can cause raw sewage to overflow into nearby bodies of water or into home basements. The cost of such flooding can be enormous. For example, one three-hour rainfall event in August 2005 in Toronto produced over 160 millimetres of rainwater and led to 13,000 flooded basements, representing \$500 million in damages. In fact, storm sewer runoff is the number one cause of urban water pollution. There is a clear need to invest in new dedicated storm sewer systems and to create catchment basins to capture overflow during heavy rainstorms that would otherwise spill into waterways.

We know, however, from the last Conservative budget that the federal government in the next three years will not be spending enough on municipal infrastructure renewal and expansion so that it can register a balanced budget in time for the next federal election. According to the 2014 budget, the federal government will spend, on average, only about \$300 million per year on new infrastructure projects across Canada. How can the government properly help upgrade storm sewer systems and other municipal infrastructure, including other water infrastructure, on such a budget?

• (2410)

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can understand why my colleague opposite would not want to talk about GHG emission reductions, because we actually led the United States two years ago.

We put our reductions in place in order to deal with coal-fired power generation.

In terms of municipal infrastructure, I think he is well aware that we have the largest municipal infrastructure program that has ever been put in place by a government of Canada.

I want to talk a bit tonight about adaptation. Our government is committed to helping Canadians make any necessary adaptation, and as such, we have taken action to better understand what is happening in relation to climate change and to help Canadians prepare for the potential impacts by making investments in priority areas. Since 2006, our government has invested \$235 million in domestic adaptation initiatives, which support decision-making in key priority areas, including human health, the north and rural communities, and economic competitiveness. I would like to talk a bit tonight about some of the examples of these activities.

Through Environment Canada's climate change prediction and scenarios program, the government continues to provide updated information about observed and projected changes in climate. Part of this foundational work will be to allow the government to provide credible, scientifically sound information to support adaptation planning and decision-making in Canada.

Through the Standards Council of Canada, with support from Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, we are providing funding to update critical codes and standards in the north to adapt new and existing infrastructure as well. By equipping Canadians with the information, knowledge, and tools they need to make more informed decisions, we will be better able to manage risks associated with changing climates and better positioned to take advantage of new economic opportunities that emerge along the way.

This government is also making relevant investments in disaster mitigation and infrastructure. In budget 2014, the Government of Canada announced \$200 million over five years to better protect Canadians and their homes through a national disaster mitigation program. The program will support investments such as infrastructure to control floods.

The government is also committed to working with first nations groups and provincial and territorial partners to help first nations become more resilient to natural disasters, such as flooding and forest fires, which often threaten the health and safety of their communities. To that end, economic action plan 2014 proposed to provide \$40 million over five years for disaster mitigation programming on reserves.

In addition to these investments, disaster mitigation projects are eligible for federal funding under the \$14 billion new Building Canada fund, which was also announced in budget 2014. We would certainly welcome the member's support for our budget.

Adjournment Proceedings

I am pleased to have had this opportunity to highlight some of the many specific actions we have taken and investments we are making to help protect Canadians and Canadian infrastructure.

• (2415)

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia: Mr. Speaker, a study of stormwater management strategies in three U.S. cities with high rainfall revealed that it is between 7.5 to 200 times cheaper to invest in watershed improvements than building more catch basins, storm sewers, and engineered waterfalls.

Will ecosystem restoration and climate change adaptation projects be eligible under the new Building Canada fund? Given the relatively small amounts the government has put aside for new infrastructure projects in the next few years, would these kinds of low-tech investments in climate change mitigation not make sense?

I should mention that the City of Beaconsfield in my riding of Lac-Saint-Louis recognizes the value of ecosystem restoration for protecting water courses. This past May, Mayor Georges Bourelle, on behalf of the Beaconsfield council, called on the Quebec government to legislate wetlands protection in the province in recognition of the fact that, “Wetlands are well known for their critical role in water purification, their capacity to absorb flood water, and the natural habitat they provide for several threatened species.”

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Speaker, the member opposite is well aware of how well we work with provincial governments and

municipal authorities in order for them to be able to access our infrastructure programs. That includes the \$14 billion in the new Building Canada fund.

Going back a couple of years, budget 2011 included \$148.8 million in funding between 2011 and 2016 for ten adaptation programs from nine federal departments and agencies. The member opposite should know that these programs focused on four areas: science to inform adaptation and decision-making, human health and wellbeing, north and aboriginal communities, and economic competitiveness.

Prior to this, our government had made an investment of \$85.9 million in adaptation between 2007 and 2011.

Combined, our government has invested \$235 million in specific domestic adaptation programs and activities since 2006.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Pursuant to an order made on Tuesday, May 27, 2014, the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until later this day, at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12:17 a.m.)

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