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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Thursday, September 18, 2014

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, September 18, 2014

The House met at 10 a.m.

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[*Translation*]

VACANCY

YELLOWHEAD

The Speaker: It is my duty to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the representation:

[*English*]

Mr. Merrifield, member for the electoral district of Yellowhead, by resignation effective Wednesday, September 17, 2014. Pursuant to paragraph 25(1)(b) of the Parliament of Canada Act, I have addressed my warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for the election of a member to fill this vacancy.

* * *

AUDITOR GENERAL OF CANADA

The Speaker: I have the honour to lay upon the table the annual reports on the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act of the Auditor General of Canada for the year 2013-2014.

[*Translation*]

This document is deemed permanently referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

* * *

[*English*]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Mr. Mark Strahl (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the provisions of Standing Order 32.2, I have the honour to table, in both official languages, copies of the 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 Annual Report on the State of Inuit Culture and Society in the Nunavut Settlement Area.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties and I anticipate that if you seek it, you will receive consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practices of the House, the remainder of the debates, pursuant to Standing Order 66(2), on the motions to concur in the Third Report of the Standing Committee on Finance, presented on Tuesday, December 10, 2013 and the Second Report of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, presented on Wednesday, February 5, be deemed to have taken place and all questions necessary to dispose of the motions be deemed adopted on division.

The Speaker: Does the hon. government House leader have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this 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.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[*Translation*]

PETITIONS

CANADA POST

Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I am presenting a petition addressed to the Government of Canada with respect to the cuts and reductions in services announced by Canada Post. The people in my riding will be adversely affected both in terms of community services and job losses.

[*English*]

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I understand that earlier this week the Conservative government ratified the Canada–China foreign investment promotion and protection agreement.

Nevertheless, I can easily anticipate that the petitioners who signed this petition would want this House to hear that they call upon the Government of Canada to decline to ratify that agreement and to take immediate steps to limit the influence of state-owned enterprises over our democracy in the interest of ensuring that the power over Canadian laws remains in Canadian hands.

S. O. 52

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a number of petitions here.

First, I have four petitions asking Parliament to legislate that it be a criminal offence to purchase sex with a woman, man, or child, and that it be a criminal offence for pimps, madams, or others to profit from the proceeds of the sex trade.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have one petition with quite a number of names on it from my riding and across the country, asking that the government regulate the use of and monitor the impact of neonicotinoids in agricultural applications.

CANADA POST

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today on behalf of my constituents in Newton—North Delta to present the following petition in protest of the Conservative government's decision to end door-to-door mail service for Canadians, increase postal rates, and close post offices across the country.

Via this petition, my constituents ask the government to reverse these job-killing changes. They also protest against the negative impact these cuts are going to have on the most vulnerable in our community, including our seniors.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

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

The first is from Canadians from every province from coast to coast, calling on the government to create a department of peace in the interest of pursuing conflict resolution, peace, and non-violence in trouble spots around the world.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is very timely, as next week is the special UN summit on climate solutions. This petition is from primarily constituents in my own riding, Saanich—Gulf Islands, calling on the government to put into place a meaningful climate plan and a strategy to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to no less than 80% of their 1990 levels by 2050.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

SEISMIC SURVEYS

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of a request for an emergency debate from the hon. member for Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup.

[Translation]

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thank you for considering my request this morning.

During the early stages of seismic work off the coast of Cacouna, Canadians were initially provided a study that was never disputed by the NDP. The comprehensive study was requested by the Canadian Science Advisory Secretariat and the responses were provided by the Fisheries and Oceans Canada's Science Branch.

The report contains very important information, including this:

The Beluga population has been listed as "threatened"...The Government of Canada has a duty under this Act to protect this population and prevent the destruction of its Critical Habitat.

The conclusion states:

Should the noise generated by the surveys cause the Beluga to avoid this area, a large portion of the Beluga's spring habitat would be compromised. It is therefore important to limit the time span of the work and avoid sensitive periods.

This document was signed by six marine mammal and endangered species experts from the science branch.

When the proponent sought permission to undertake drilling—which has begun—what Canadians got was this little document that you cannot even find on Google. You have to look hard to find it. You almost have to get it by force. It is signed by a single biologist who is not a marine mammal expert. Expert opinions from Fisheries and Oceans Canada's science branch on the impact of this activity on critical beluga habitat are absent from this document, gone, kaput. Worse still, provincial ministry officials testified before the Superior Court yesterday. According to various reports, they repeatedly asked for an opinion from Fisheries and Oceans Canada's science branch. Despite their persistent inquiries, they never got an answer from Fisheries and Oceans Canada's marine mammal experts. Their questions were never answered.

In closing, one can only conclude that the government did everything in its power to prevent the endangered species experts at Fisheries and Oceans Canada's science branch from providing their scientific opinion on activities that could affect an endangered species. That is serious. It is bad for my region's reputation, and it is bad for Canada's reputation. This is exactly the kind of behaviour that violates the public's trust in government.

Mr. Speaker, please give us a chance to earn that trust and let MPs, who were elected by the people, debate this issue in the House.

● (1010)

The Speaker: I would like to thank the hon. member for his request. I have no doubt that this is an important issue to the hon. member, but I do not believe that this is a matter for an emergency debate.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

COASTAL FISHERIES PROTECTION ACT

Hon. Lisa Raitt (for the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans) moved that Bill S-3, An Act to amend the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to begin this debate on Bill S-3, An Act to amend the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act.

Like other responsible coastal nations around the world, Canada is concerned about the economic and environmental impact of illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. In fact, we have a moral and legal obligation to help stop these illegitimate practices. Today, with the amendments to the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act as outlined here in Bill S-3, we have the opportunity to act.

With the existing Coastal Fisheries Protection Act and regulations, Canada already has a robust control regime for foreign fishing vessels.

In recent years, the international community has been working diligently to strengthen tools to prevent, deter, and eliminate illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, and activities that support that practice. Improving controls over foreign fishing vessels in port through global standards is one of several important tools to accomplish this goal. I am proud to say that Canada has played an important role in this development.

For that reason, I am proud to lend my support to the proposed legislation before the House.

Before we examine the bill, some background might help to put the proposed amendments into a larger context, which I think members might find helpful, and underscore why they are so important.

For decades, the international community has developed laws and standards to protect the earth's vast marine resources. More than 30 years ago, for example, the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea confirmed that states have responsibilities for conservation.

Then, several years later, the United Nations fish stocks agreement of 1995 emphasized the role and responsibility of states in conserving fish stocks. This was also a very welcome measure.

Unfortunately, the practice of illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing has become big business. A study produced by the United Kingdom in 2008, for example, suggested that illegal fishing was costing the world economy up to \$23 billion annually, representing between 11% and 19% of total reported catch worldwide.

How does illegal fishing hurt the global economy? Fishing vessels that do not follow rules and regulations minimize their operating costs. They then sell fish at a cheaper price than legitimate fish harvesters, distorting prices and markets along the value chain.

Government Orders

While Canada diligently monitors and regulates fishing, we are not immune to the economic impact of illegal activities. Let us consider for a moment that we export up to 85% of our fish and sea products. In 2012, the last year for which the statistics are available, these exports were worth about \$4.1 billion. This is an impressive figure, but it could be higher if markets were not distorted by illegal and unregulated catch.

Let me give a real-life example. On the west coast of Canada off British Columbia, the sea urchin fishery has been in place since about the 1950s. It started to grow significantly in the 1980s. Sea urchin was caught and urchin roe was sold to the Japanese market. It is a delicacy there, although I am not sure I understand why.

By 2002 this fishery was thriving. There were 70 boats and \$25 million in exports. However, almost right at that time, an illegal and unregulated fishery began around the Kuril Islands, an archipelago stretching from northern Japan to the southeast coast of Russia. This fishery was mainly operated by organized crime based in eastern Europe.

In 2003, for example, in just one day, the illegal fishery dumped the equivalent of B.C.'s entire annual green sea urchin quota onto the market. It was about 200 tons. In just one week, they dumped B.C.'s entire annual red sea urchin quota, about 4,500 tonnes, onto the market. The price fell, and B.C.'s export market to Japan all but collapsed. In British Columbia, this affected real people with families to care for and mortgages to pay.

● (1015)

Illegal fish harvesters do more than wreak havoc on the economy. Their practices harm efforts to protect ecosystems and habitat. Why? It is because they operate for short-term profit, not long-term sustainability.

In 2009, the international community approved the port state measures agreement, technically known as the Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing. It was negotiated through the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, which promised real and cost-effective solutions to the problem of illegal fishing. The agreement requires port state measures for controlling the access of foreign fishing vessels to the ports of coastal nations like Canada. Improving these rules globally is considered a cost-effective way to fight illegal fishing.

I might just say here that obviously the problem has two sides to it. Fishing vessels fly flags of the states from which they come. They have an obligation, as we do in Canada, to make sure those vessels follow the rules; but they also offload in ports, not necessarily their own, and it is these measures we are talking about.

Government Orders

Rest assured that Canada already has strong rules when it comes to foreign fishing vessels, but this would strengthen our point of entry checks on incoming fish and fish products. The port state measures agreement establishes minimum standards for states to deal with foreign fishing vessels implicated in illegal fishing activity.

Canada signed the agreement in 2010, indicating our intention to ratify it. However, before we ratify it, we must shore up some gaps in our own domestic legislation related to monitoring, enforcement and information sharing. That is what Bill S-3 is seeking to do. Once approved, the proposed amendments to the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act would allow us to meet our international obligations as a responsible member of the international community and to enhance the integrity of legitimate fish harvesting activities in Canada.

With this context, allow me to review and provide some additional detail on the proposed amendments, which can be loosely grouped into three broad categories. The first concerns enhancing and fine tuning controls over foreign fishing vessels that are seeking to access our ports. Under the current act, fishing vessels must apply for a licence to enter Canadian fisheries waters and to access our ports, at least 30 days before they arrive. Under the proposed amendment, the minister could allow a foreign vessel that has been directed by its flag state to enter a Canadian port even if it has not applied for a port licence, to the extent that the vessel has been ordered to port by its flag state for enforcement purposes.

In this case, Canada would issue a specific permit for the sole purpose of inspection and enforcement. While the port state measures agreement generally promotes refusal of entry to fishing vessels that have engaged in illegal fishing, there might be situations where the flag state—that is to say the country responsible for the fishing vessel—might want Canada's assistance to conduct an inspection and to gather evidence of a violation.

It is not enough to direct vessels suspected of illegal fishing into our ports. We must then arm Canadian fisheries protection officers with greater powers to enforce the amended Coastal Fisheries Protection Act and the regulations. These amendments would thus increase the powers of Canadian fisheries officers to inspect a suspected foreign fishing vessel in port and to search for and seize illegal catch when that vessel is directed to port under the new permit regime. This would strengthen current prohibitions regarding the import of fish or marine plants that have been taken, harvested, processed, transported, distributed or sold in contravention of international law. I stress that officers would have to have reasonable grounds to believe the vessel had been engaged in illegal fishing activities for the exercise of these powers.

The second set of amendments involves information sharing. Without accurate intelligence about the activities of illegal fish harvesters, Canada's fisheries protection officers are at a tremendous disadvantage. If we do not have better information about the potential for illegal operations, illegal fish harvesters will quite literally leave authorities in their wake.

•(1020)

To meet the requirements of the port state measures agreement, the amendments provide clarity on the authority to share information.

The amendments cover both the type of information and with whom it can be shared.

First, the amendments clearly outline that the minister has legal authority to share information regarding the following: the inspection of the foreign vessel; refusal of entry to port to a foreign vessel; a change in decision regarding such a refusal; enforcement action taken; or the outcome of any proceeding relating to a decision on port access. For example, we could access the results of any enforcement activity or the outcome of a legal proceeding. Knowing that a vessel has been involved in numerous offences also raises a red flag for our fisheries protection officers and would lead to a refusal of port access.

Second, the amendments clarify that the minister can share this information with the flag state of the vessel, relevant coastal states, regional fisheries, management organizations, states in whose fisheries waters the illegal fishing may have occurred, the state of nationality of the owner of the vessel, the Food and Agriculture Organization, and other relevant international organizations. It is a very broad power. For example, if France refused entry to a foreign fishing vessel and then shared the name of the vessel with us, our protection officers would be on the alert if that vessel tried to enter port in Canada.

Third, amendments to the act clarify that the minister may report, to other state parties, actions that Canada has taken with respect to Canadian vessels that have engaged in illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing or fishing-related activities in support of such fishing. In addition, the proposed amendments would enable Fisheries and Oceans Canada and the Canada Border Services Agency to share with each other relevant information related to the importation of fish, fish products and marine plants. That is an important initiative.

Having information is one thing, and being able to act on it is quite another. That is why the third major category of amendments concerns prohibitions and offences and enforcement powers, providing an expansion of the powers of fisheries protection officers.

Currently, fisheries officers can only investigate seaports and wharves for illegal catch, but since illegal catch does not always come to port in fishing vessels, one of the important innovations in the agreement is to target illegally harvested living marine resources and products, including marine plants, that enter not only on a fishing vessel but in a shipping container on a large ship. The bill would therefore prohibit the importation of fish, marine plants and products that have been taken, harvested, processed, transported, distributed or sold in contravention of international law—to use the language of the bill—in order to foreclose this additional avenue of illicit access to our market. The negotiators of the agreement wanted to ensure that strong actions taken against fishing vessels would not be circumvented by the use of other vessels to transport or transship the catch to ports. These amendments would enable Canada to exercise appropriate border controls to close the front door when necessary, so to speak.

Government Orders

With these amendments, Canada is once again assuming a leadership role in the fight against illegal fishing, by taking this concept a step further. These amendments take the measures in the agreement aimed at container vessels to the next level, as Canada is entitled to do. They would enable fisheries protection officers to inspect any place, including containers, warehouses, storage areas and vehicles at all ports of entry, including airports and beyond—effectively, wherever such products may be found. This power would enable fisheries protection officers to support and enhance the work of CBSA customs agents. At the same time, fisheries protection officers would have the power to enter and search these places with a warrant and, if circumstances demanded, without a warrant, working in conjunction with customs officials as required.

These amendments would allow fisheries officers to seize illegal, unreported and unregulated caught fish, fish products and marine plants aboard the vessel or in any other place believed to be obtained by or used in the commission of an offence under the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act. However, further deterrence is necessary when dealing with illegal fish harvesters whose main concern is monetary profits. If it is shown that foreign vessels have been engaged in or have supported illegal, unreported, unregulated fishing, substantial fines can be imposed: on summary conviction, a fine of up to \$100,000; upon conviction on indictment, a fine of up to \$500,000; and on a second conviction, double these fines.

• (1025)

Moreover, if a court finds the person guilty of an offence under the act, the court could order the person to pay an additional fine equal to the estimated benefit they expected to gain from committing the offence. This structure would present a significant deterrent to this very serious crime and would demonstrate to illegal fish harvesters that Canada is serious about putting an end to their illegal endeavours.

In addition to these broad categories, the amendments also cover several changes in definitions required by the port state measures agreement. For example, the amended definition of “fishing vessel” could include any vessel used in transshipping fish or marine plants, but it would exclude vessels equipped to transship that are not involved in supporting fishing activity at sea, such as vessels transporting general merchandise.

The proposed amendments would also redefine the term “fish” itself. In keeping with the port state measures agreement, “fish” would come to mean a species of living marine resources, whether processed or not. The amendments would also add a definition of “marine plant”, because marine plants are also living marine resources.

The port state measures agreement outlines cost-effective and practical solutions to the problem of illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing. Bill S-3 would strengthen Canada's Coastal Fisheries Protection Act and enable Canada to exercise enhanced port controls and importation measures consistent with, and in fact even stronger than, the minimum standards established in the port state measures agreement. These amendments would once again demonstrate Canada's leading role in the international fight against illegal fishing. These amendments are a step forward in that fight. These robust measures would limit the quantities of illegal fish that

enter our market and other markets around the world where Canadian fish harvesters sell their products. Canada's fish harvesters stand to benefit from a more level playing field.

To date, 11 members of the Food and Agriculture Organization have become parties to the agreement. We need to maintain the momentum so that the 25 parties required for the agreement to enter into force will be achieved sooner rather than later. Today, by supporting Bill S-3, the House has an opportunity to move Canada one step closer to ratification, one step closer to helping protect the livelihoods of legitimate fish harvesters, one step closer to effective conservation and management of living marine resources and protection of the fragile ecosystems that support their existence.

I urge all hon. members to join me in supporting Bill S-3. We can do no less.

• (1030)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the parliamentary secretary for his speech. This is a very interesting bill, and I think that we should support it going to committee so that we can debate it further.

This bill was introduced previously in the Senate as Bill S-13. It was delayed because of prorogation. It took a long time to pass it there and introduce it here in the House.

I would like to ask the parliamentary secretary about the economic impact of such a long delay due to prorogation. Has Canada experienced any economic repercussions because the measures in this bill have not been implemented?

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Kamp: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question. We miss him on the fisheries committee these days.

Clearly, this is an important piece of legislation, and it is moving through the parliamentary process as it should. Like many pieces of legislation, it was delayed by prorogation, and now we are moving it through as expeditiously as we can.

I am happy to hear that this might well be supported by the opposition. It really is a good piece of legislation.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I too agree that Bill S-3 has to be brought forward and dealt with in order that the government can meet its international obligations. Of course, surveillance is so important, and the illegal fishery is one of the biggest problems we have in our country.

I would like to ask this of the minister, but I will have to ask the parliamentary secretary. Why was \$4.2 million removed from offshore surveillance? That is a large amount of money. We have lost surveillance, which is so important to make sure we know what is going on off our coast. Why did the government take \$4.2 million out?

I agree the legislation is vital. We need it. It is good to have the legislation, but we have to have the clout with it. From what I can see, the government has removed a lot of the clout. Why?

Government Orders

Mr. Randy Kamp: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure I agree with the conclusion that the member for Cardigan has reached. In fact, with regard to the regional fisheries management organization with which he is probably most familiar, which we call NAFO, the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization, we continue to be a very important partner because, of course, there are straddling stocks that affect our fisheries.

The enforcement and surveillance activities in which we have been engaged over the years have become quite effective. He will see, if he looks at the data, that the number of violations has continued to decline over the years as we get better at doing what we are doing.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, reviewing Bill S-3, an act to amend the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act, is a very positive step forward. I am concerned, though, about process.

I understand that this bill originated in the Senate. It was amended in the Senate. It has now come to this place, and as I understand the hon. parliamentary secretary, there will be further amendments put forward in committee. I assume it then has to go back to the Senate.

I am wondering if the government can explain why a bill this important has taken such a circuitous route.

• (1035)

Mr. Randy Kamp: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member would know that bills have to go through both the House and the other place, and sometimes they begin there and sometimes they begin here. I am hoping that the bill will pass at second reading and will be referred to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. We will give it due diligence there as well, review it carefully, and make sure that it gets passed as quickly as possible.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to this issue.

Once again, I would remind the House of the possible economic impact resulting from the fact that this bill has not passed more quickly. I have the same concern as my colleague from Saanich—Gulf Islands regarding how we seem to go around in circles between the House of Commons and the Senate. The question I have is this: Why did we have to go through such a ponderous process to ratify an agreement that is already supported by the United Nations?

There is no doubt that the bill needs some improvement. Every member I have spoken to so far really wants to be able to propose amendments. From what I understand of the parliamentary process, this means that the bill will have to go back to the Senate for a second time.

This will have a serious economic impact. The delay matters. This is also true when it comes to income protection for our fishers as well as the protection of our fishing industry. We also need to honour our international obligations. That is why I think this deserves a little more support.

Personally, I am very pleased to have this opportunity to ask the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans some questions. I do not necessarily need to ask the minister my

questions, so I am glad the parliamentary secretary is here with us today.

What will be done to accelerate the process? What will the Conservatives do at the parliamentary committee level? Will the witnesses be called quickly? Will the topics be added to the agenda as soon as possible? Will a substantive debate be held on this subject?

Time and time again, debates at the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans have been held in camera. Will this debate be open to the public? When we submit our witness list, will the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans promise to listen to those witnesses?

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Kamp: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, and I think it is a fair one.

The member knows that the committee is the master of its own destiny, so I cannot answer those questions. I can tell him, though, that the government has an interest in the bill passing as quickly as possible. Of course, it has not passed at this point or been referred to the committee, so his questions might be a little premature.

With respect to his comment about the economic impact, I understand that, and that is obviously one of the reasons we are wanting to pass this bill to amend the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act. However, the point should not be missed that the act we already have and would amend with this bill is a robust one. It gives officials significant power to combat illegal fishing and the importation of illegally caught fish products. As well, we have a very well-managed flag state regime for our own fishing industry. That is a good thing.

Really, this is an international agreement, because as an international community, we need to do better around the world at stopping these products entering port. However, Canada already does a very good job of that.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Northwest Territories, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an interesting bill. It deals with two oceans that surround Canada, but a third ocean, the Arctic Ocean, is one that is not represented in this bill.

Perhaps the minister could talk about the representation of the newest and least protected fishing area Canada may be participating in and how this bill could be modified to support the future likelihood of fishing in the Arctic.

• (1040)

Mr. Randy Kamp: Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the port state measures agreement applies to all oceans around the world, not just the Pacific and the Atlantic. It applies to the Arctic and the Indian Ocean as well as others. It is an important bill.

With respect to the potential of fishing in the Arctic, it has always been our position that those decisions need to be based on science and very carefully thought out. There are not many fish species that would appear to lend themselves to a commercial fishery at this point, but those decisions will have to be made in the future based on scientific information. We are co-operating with other parties in the Arctic to make sure that this is the approach that is taken.

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, I have the honour of sharing my views on Bill S-3, An Act to amend the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act.

I listened carefully to the speech given by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans on this bill, and I think that he raised some very interesting points.

This bill should be referred to the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans for further debate. It should probably also be amended. I hope that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans and his colleagues will support these amendments.

Nonetheless, there are some problems with this bill that should be debated here in the House of Commons. My first concern is that this bill has already been debated in the Senate.

Today, the government seems to be ignoring our parliamentary procedures and traditions. Usually, bills are introduced in the House of Commons before they go to the Senate, and there are several reasons for that.

It is not just because members like debating these issues in the House of Commons. It is because we are the elected representatives of the people. We raise our concerns and those of our constituents in a place where they may have some bearing. We should therefore start with a debate here in the House.

People generally believe that the Senate is a chamber of sober second thought and that it provides a second chance to ensure that we did not miss anything in the House of Commons.

Unfortunately, that is not the case here. This bill was introduced in the Senate, where the senators diligently did their job and proposed amendments. Now, the bill has come before the House of Commons, where other amendments may be proposed, and the bill will then have to go back to the Senate for a second time.

This is a waste of time, and this way of doing things disregards the role of the House of Commons. The House should have the right to examine bills first. The House is not supposed to oversee the Senate. That has never been its role.

To be quite honest, I believe that the Senate should be abolished, end of story. This institution has no place in a free, democratic and modern parliament. To some extent, this institution is keeping us trapped in the past, but anyway.

The fact remains that the bill has finally come before us. We are interested in debating it and either passing it as is or amending it. Personally, I believe amendments are needed.

I just want to point out that this bill does more than just amend the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act. The purpose of the bill is to ratify an international agreement adopted by a number of countries, including those of the European Union.

The agreement that will be ratified by this bill is the port state measures agreement. This United Nations agreement shows that it is in our best interest to work with our international partners in order to

achieve effective management of a healthy industry, management on which the nations of this world can agree.

I think it is great that the government before us is prepared to adopt an international agreement. We have often seen this government struggle with ratifying, adopting and honouring international agreements, except for those it makes in secret, like the free trade agreements that we still have not seen. I am talking about the free trade agreement with Europe. This government does not want Canadians to be able to read the text and decide whether they agree with it or not.

Fortunately, the United Nations seems to be taking the right approach. It is obliged to disclose agreements before those agreements are ratified. Our government could learn a thing or two from the United Nations.

● (1045)

I absolutely want this bill to promote a healthy fishery in Canada. It will certainly improve things.

There have been many occasions when we have seen shortcomings in the tools available to us. The parliamentary secretary said there was already very effective legislation in place that might be improved by this bill. For the most part, I agree with him. However, if there is an international agreement, if other countries can teach us ways of improving our practices in Canada, then we should listen and adopt those practices, if they can help us.

According to the United Nations, illegal fishing has reached a pretty high level internationally. In 2008, pirate fishing was worth an estimated \$10 billion to \$23 billion a year. We know that related industries in Canada generate roughly \$5.5 billion a year and that 71,000 full-time jobs are linked to the fishery and related industries such as aquaculture and processing. That is a lot of money.

International fishing lowers the price of fish products. We know that the arrival of an illegal product on the market has a negative impact on the price. There are already too many concerns about the price of fish products. Every year lobster fishermen in the Maritimes find it difficult to get a price that will ensure the economic survival of their industry. We have seen this many times in other industries as well.

We really want to have the tools to ensure that prices are realistic and reflect the reality of the legitimate fishing industry. We do not want to subsidize the illegal industry. Unfortunately, today, there is still too much illegal fishing. This bill will help us eliminate much of this illegal fishing.

We should remember that there are elements of the bill that are of great concern. The tools we will provide to our officers will be helpful, but do these officers have all the tools they need? Are there enough officers on the job?

In his question for the parliamentary secretary, my colleague from Cardigan did say that there were significant cuts to surveillance by Fisheries and Oceans. The parliamentary secretary replied that he was not worried about it and that even if there were cuts, illegal fishing in Canada has declined.

Government Orders

It is quite reasonable to suspect that, if there is a downsizing of surveillance personnel in Canada, we will not be able to properly assess illegal fishing because it is done at night. We need open tools. We need effective tools on the water in order to really control illegal fishing. I think it would be advisable for the parliamentary secretary to take his analysis further and determine what exactly is the actual reduction or perhaps increase in illegal fishing in Canada.

Fisheries and Oceans Canada has suffered a huge number of cuts in recent years. I suspect that the department is not capable of putting a figure on how much illegal fishing is going on in Canada. I am sorry, but I have a hard time believing the parliamentary secretary when he tells us that illegal fishing is on the decline. I do not think the data are there to support that assessment. I implore the parliamentary secretary to talk to his minister and ask her to increase the number of staff, not only in surveillance at Fisheries and Oceans Canada, but also in all of the department's sectors. This department has probably gone through more budget cuts than any other department.

● (1050)

It is time for things to change and for the department to start increasing spending instead of always making cuts.

We heard in the news that scientists at Fisheries and Oceans Canada were laid off. There is a lack of information on the studies that need to be done, including in the case of the port of Cacouna, an item that recently popped up in the news. We have seen repeatedly that Fisheries and Oceans Canada simply does not have the tools it needs.

The bill will also give surveillance powers to our officers. It is hard to justify these new powers, but I am waiting for the parliamentary secretary to explain where the government is going with this.

I want to talk more specifically about the power being given to inspectors, who will be able to conduct searches at sea without a warrant. I doubt that this power will pass the legal test. I am not even sure that our border officers have this power. The government wants to give this power to our fisheries officers, when officers on land do not seem to have that power. I do not understand how this power is useful or valid. Once again, I would like to hear from the parliamentary secretary on that, especially if this bill makes it to committee, so that we have a better idea of where the Conservatives are coming from.

If it is true that officers can conduct this type of search, we have to wonder whether they would be putting themselves in danger. That is something that these workers will have to ask themselves. The ocean is isolated. It is rather big. The officers are far from resources and support. It is a matter of safety for workers. I am concerned about this power being granted to workers, but once again, I am looking forward to hearing further justifications from the government so that we understand where it is coming from.

In addition, the bill poses a legal problem: it takes the new definition of justice from section 2 of the Criminal Code.

[*English*]

According to the Criminal Code, justices include justices of the peace and provincial court judges. The problem we have with that in Newfoundland is that justices of the peace do not exist, first of all, and they certainly do not have the capacity to hand out injunctions and search orders.

I am a little concerned that we are creating in inequality between the provinces when it comes to the bill. I want to hear more from the government side as to what it means to give this sort of power to a justice of the peace.

I will briefly quote a court case, which passed through the courts about 15 years ago, *R. v. Saunders*, 2002. From Carswell Newfoundland, this is section 155, paragraph 19:

Search warrants are obtained on an ex parte basis.... They are often obtained from justices of the peace who have little legal training and they are often requested on short notice. ...many of them have received little if any training. This is unfair...and makes it impossible for them to fulfill their constitutional obligations. This search warrant illustrates that this is a situation that is no longer acceptable. If the power to issue is going to be granted, then at least a minimum level of training should be provided.

● (1055)

[*Translation*]

A search warrant is a very powerful tool. People who are perhaps ill-equipped to issue one are being asked consider doing so. Issuing a search warrant to officers who will be isolated and unsupported when they go to sea might put them in a very dangerous situation.

Unfortunately, Fisheries and Oceans Canada has made a lot of cuts to the Coast Guard, which has put its employees in an increasingly precarious situation.

The cuts to Fisheries and Oceans Canada might jeopardize the safety of mariners or Government of Canada officers at sea. We are concerned for their safety. Unfortunately, Fisheries and Oceans Canada is moving in the opposite direction by cutting resources that would give these people the support they need.

I am not interested in talking about recent situations where there were marine safety problems. I would simply like to say that since I was elected in 2011, there have been some fairly serious situations every year where people were in danger when they should not have been. We need to have tools in place to ensure their safety. Unfortunately, the government is moving in the opposite direction.

Not only does this bill jeopardize the safety of our officers at sea, but it also allows someone with little understanding of the potential risk to officers to grant the right to proceed with a search. It is a very perilous situation.

I hope the parliamentary secretary will give us more information on the direction the government intends to take with this. Why is it proposing such a bill? What will it do to ensure that Fisheries and Oceans Canada is equipped to protect officers and mariners in general?

Government Orders

Today, we heard the parliamentary secretary talk about the bill, and I am very pleased about that. However, I doubt that any other members will come forward to debate this bill today. Frankly, I think it is a bit shameful that the government is not taking this opportunity to fully explain its viewpoint. It is unfortunate that the government is not asking members to go over Bill S-3 carefully and thoroughly.

We are asking questions, but we are not getting answers. We expect the government to introduce and defend its bills, but all we get is radio silence. Today is no exception. I would be surprised if even one Conservative member made a speech today. It is unfortunate, but that is the way things are.

I will come back to the bill, which I think addresses some problems. Illegal fishing must certainly be stopped. Apart from conducting searches, officers will be able to inspect containers, even on land, and vehicles, which they were not able to do before. In fact, the legislation allowed them to inspect only vessels used directly for illegal fishing. Bill S-3 broadens the definition, enabling officers to conduct much more comprehensive inspections. Of course, the fact that they will be able to do so just on a hunch worries me. The government must be very clear and ensure that Bill S-3 is consistent with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, specifically paragraph 11(d), which states that any person charged with an offence has the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty by an impartial tribunal.

This bill will give the minister the power to impose penalties, but those being penalized will not have the opportunity to defend themselves. We really have to be careful. This bill goes too far in some respects. Some of the powers it gives to the minister are justified, but others are not. Once again, we are heading for court challenges that could take years.

• (1100)

The courts will probably shoot down parts of this bill. Once again, this is a waste of time. Taking this bill to the Senate wasted time, and now more time will be wasted because this bill will most likely go before the courts so that they can get rid of the parts that are unjustified.

If we pass this bill, and that is certainly what I recommend we do, I hope that the parliamentary committee will pay close attention to the witnesses and think long and hard about amending it. That being said, on the whole, this bill deserves our attention and our support.

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, my colleague raised some issues in his speech that we will consider further at committee. I appreciate him outlining them for us.

I want to clarify something and maybe ask a follow-up question on it. On the relevant provision of the bill, paragraph 7.4 about inspection powers, it applies only in the context of an inspection. For example, if a flagged state contacts Canada and says that a vessel needs to be inspected or it has other reasons to believe that it might contain illegally caught fish, the provision allows a fisheries officer to enter a dwelling for the purposes of verifying compliance with the act.

In that case, the officer might go to a justice of the peace, but only for the power to inspect. If the protection officer then concludes that there may be a violation, then he would have to go to a justice of the peace, under the terms of the Criminal Code, to get a search warrant to gather evidence that could be used in a prosecution.

Would the member agree that with fisheries violations like illegal fishing, that time often is of the essence and there needs to be a streamlined process for inspections and potentially searches to take place?

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, it is a valid point that time is of the essence. If there is one thing that marks Canadian law, it is that it is generally pragmatic, and I would like to see that reflected here. However, the pragmatism has to go beyond the law. It has to also be the resources that are afforded to those inspectors. We need to know they are safe. We need to know they are well trained. We need to know they will have the backup they need.

I have no problem with the bill giving the tools that are required. Again, I am looking forward to hearing what the witnesses at the parliamentary committee have to say as to what those tools could be. However, I want to ensure that the parliamentary secretary is on board with the idea that his ministry needs the allocation of resources to ensure safety at sea is of paramount concern.

Regrettably, with the cutback I have seen in the last three years, I have my doubts that the ministry is even capable of fulfilling its mandate in this regard.

• (1105)

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I agree that this legislation is quite important. We have to meet our international obligations. We have to ensure the illegal fishing is stopped, or at least curtailed as much as possible. However, we look at the situation as it is today, with the major cuts that have taken place at DFO. We look at the surveillance cut by \$4.2 million, the scientific cuts and all the other cuts at DFO. I would like the member to comment on it.

I agree that it is great to pass the legislation, but the legislation is no good without teeth. I am sure my hon. colleague would agree with that and I would like him to expand on how he feels about the cuts that have taken place and how devastating it is to DFO and our surveillance.

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, I do not think it will come as any surprise to the member for Cardigan that I completely agree with him on this point. We need to look at past and recent instances of failings on the part of search and rescue operations and inspection operations in our country.

Government Orders

I will give the example of when we recently talked of possibly cutting the Maritime search and rescue centre in Quebec City. We closed the one in St. John's, Newfoundland to have it centred now only in Halifax. There was a lack of resources to respond to an emergency call. There is a service of last defence that exists in this world and it is located in Italy. It is not meant as a front-line service. It is meant as a service of desperation, if no one else can answer a distress call. Canada, a G7 country, was unable to take the distress call. We had to send it to Italy to a person who had no idea of the geography, who did not master the language. In the Gulf of St. Lawrence in Atlantic Canada, an Italian would have a hard time understanding the accent.

We need to know that the services are available for our front-line workers. Frankly, the government is falling flat. The Conservatives should be ashamed of themselves in this regard, and they have a lot to prove to bring the respect of our workers back to the government. We need to ensure that the government understands the risk these people are under and this may be a tool in the right direction, but it is only one tool. We need the resources, and that is what is lacking. Perhaps the government could consider putting binding resources in the bill that would make it much more palatable.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to comments of my colleague with interest. I thought he made some great points and good suggestions.

Illegal fishing is a great concern for the country. We want to ensure we have as many protections and measures in place to prevent that, so this legislation, as outlined, is a step in the right direction. However, I am very concerned about the resources that are being provided to our departments to enforce the legislation.

As we know, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans has suffered cuts. We have cuts on the west coast. Specifically, we have lost our Kitsilano Coast Guard station, which was another very important and vital resource on the west coast. We have had the shutting down of MCTS stations. Just recently we have learned that our two Hovercraft on the west coast are not in operation. They need to be repaired. For instance, if a plane were to go down at YVR and, heaven forbid, land in the mud flats, which is right where a Hovercraft would respond, we would not have that kind of search and rescue available.

We also have had scientific cuts. We have had enforcement cuts. Should there not be a dedicated focus on resources provided along with this legislation so our Fisheries and Oceans officers can do the kind of rescue and prevention that is needed and required in the bill? I know it is focused on illegal fishing, but should it not contain the kind of resourcing that is really needed?

• (1110)

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, I am detecting a theme, and that is that the capacity of the ministry has been diminished substantially in the last few years.

People on the opposition benches seem to agree that we need to look at the aspect of the capacity of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans to deliver on the elements that are found within this bill, never mind the rest of the mandate.

My colleague mentioned the closure of the marine traffic control centre in Kitsilano. Others are being closed elsewhere in the country. One will be closing in my riding, in Fox River, Riviere-au-Renard. The plan is to replace it in a location on the other side of the Gulf of Saint Lawrence in a town called Les Escoumins.

The plan to diminish manpower is okay if there is a person who goes to the washroom and only one person taking calls. If two people are simultaneously having problems at sea, only one of them is going to be answered. I guess the other one is going to go to Rome, Italy to try to get a guy on the line there.

The other problem with Les Escoumins is it is buying computerized equipment that is apparently supposed to be make things more efficient. Unfortunately the equipment does not work. The closure of the marine traffic control centre in my riding will have to be put off because the plan in place does not work.

There is a lack of resources that speaks to the fact that even when there is a plan, it cannot be put in place. The plan to close the search and rescue centre in Quebec City was given up, because the capacity was not available to have a search and rescue centre elsewhere.

The problems at the Department of Fisheries and Oceans are numerous, and the capacity is simply no longer there. The government should be ashamed.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill S-3, an act to amend the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act.

Fisheries are so important to many areas of the country, and they are certainly important in my area in Prince Edward Island. Around Cardigan, Prince Edward Island, where I live and which I represent, every community depends on the fishing industry. This legislation is important.

There are over 1,300 lobster fishers on P.E.I., 11,000 inshore fishers in Atlantic Canada, and another 20,000 crew. That is well over 30,000 people involved in the fishery, just in the Atlantic region of Canada, not to mention the processing industry and other indirect jobs involved in the fishery. That is a lot in the inshore fishery.

Fisheries are worth about \$1 billion to Atlantic Canada alone. Canada's commercial fishery, aquaculture, and fish and seafood processing industries contribute \$5.4 billion and 71,000 full-time jobs to the Canadian economy every year.

There are many coastal communities that are equally reliant on having a strong fishery and effective enforcement against illegal fishing activities. At times it can be difficult to get people outside the Atlantic region and the west coast to understand exactly what the value of the fishery is and how important it is to the economy. Fish does not come from a showcase. It comes from the sea, and it is important that we have the funds, the surveillance, and the protection to make sure that the stock survives. That is why I am so pleased to say a few words on this issue today.

Government Orders

This bill would allow Canada to meet its international obligations with regard to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing. Illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, or IUU fishing, undermines the livelihood of fishers who play by the rules, both within Canada and around the world. The global economic loss due to illegal fishing is somewhere between \$10 and \$23 billion annually and represents somewhere between 11 and 26 million tonnes of fish lost to illegal fishing activity. That is a loss of 18% of the total fishery. This is a staggering number, and it is my hope that Canada, along with many other countries around the world, will continue its efforts to decrease this massive economic loss.

We know that our inshore fishers are hurting, and we need to do everything we can to help them receive a proper dollar for the world-class product they produce. In a perfect world, there would be no illegal fisheries. Vessels would all be registered with identification numbers, making them identifiable and authorized to fish by their flag states. It would also be possible to identify the owners of these vessels.

However, the fact is, there is far too much illegal fishing across the world, which is having a devastating effect on fisheries worldwide. No matter where we fish, it has an effect, because it provides an illegal product that is competition. It is important that Canada play a strong role in cracking down on the illegal fisheries, not only to protect fishers' livelihoods but to help in the conservation of our fisheries and the entire Canadian economy, in which our fisheries and seafood industry play such a major role. If there is any excess supply of fish on the market because of some illegal fishing activity, prices may be driven down, which would hurt our economy and coastal communities and the many thousands of Canadians who make their living on the sea.

Canada has long been considered a leader in the fight to combat pirate, or IUU, fishing. I am extremely proud that the Liberals have taken many steps in past years to combat illegal fishing activity. As far back as 1956, Liberal minister of fisheries James Sinclair indicated that Canada favoured a 12-mile territorial zone. In 1977, former Liberal minister of fisheries Romeo LeBlanc established the 200-mile fishing zone that protected fishermen from foreign trawlers. Mr. LeBlanc was instrumental in the establishment of the 200-mile limit and in shaping the international law of the sea.

• (1115)

Another Liberal minister of fisheries, Brian Tobin, mounted a fierce campaign through 1994 against foreign overfishing in waters in the nose and tail of the Grand Banks, located just outside Canada's declared 200-mile zone. Canadians across the country took note of this new and aggressive posture, a posture that has not been taken by any minister of fisheries since the 200-mile zone was declared in 1977.

In 1994, the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act was amended to extend its application to the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization, or NAFO, regulatory area, which is a very significant area of the Atlantic Ocean on the high seas. It was a Liberal government that amended that act.

In April 1995, DFO was involved in the so-called "turbot war", which pit Canadians against the European Union. Nevertheless, fisheries minister Tobin and the Liberal government of the day received the full backing of the United Kingdom and Ireland in this fight. Later that month, Mr. Tobin held an international news conference from a barge on the East River outside the United Nations headquarters, where he displayed an illegal trawl net that had been allegedly cut from a Spanish trawler that was arrested outside the Canadian zone on international waters.

In 1999, the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act was again amended by a Liberal government. This time it was to implement the Agreement for the Implementation of the Provisions of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea of 10 December 1982 Relating to the Conservation and Management of Straddling Fish Stocks and Highly Migratory Fish Stocks of 1995. These amendments in 1999 allowed Canada to further implement international fisheries treaties and added regulatory powers for the government.

During this time, the minister of fisheries and oceans, my colleague from Halifax West, was a strong advocate for the elimination of illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. Under his leadership, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans made significant investments to expand aerial surveillance and at-sea patrols in the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization regulatory area. The increase in patrol and surveillance led to the reduction in non-compliant behaviour and a decrease of 29% in foreign fishing vessels in the NRA.

My colleague from Halifax West was also an active member of the High Seas Task Force, an international task force committed to stopping IUU fishing in parts of the ocean not under the exclusive control of sovereign states. In addition to this, he hosted an international conference on global overfishing, which attracted fisheries and oceans ministers from around the world.

Therefore, we have a very proud tradition in this party of strong and effective leadership and action on illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing activity. Canada is considered a leader in combating illegal fishing activities, and the Liberal Party and previous Liberal governments have made strong contributions in ensuring that our system is strong.

I am pleased the government has brought this bill and intends to join the port state measures agreement. However, I do wonder why the government recently took away \$4.2 million from Canada's offshore surveillance of foreign fishing vessels. This will result in a significant reduction in Canada's monitoring capability and has been done as part of the government's gutting of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. In fact, this will result in a reduction of the total of NAFO sea days from 785 to 600, and a reduction in NAFO air hours from 1,000 to 600, along with the loss of 23 full-time employees.

Government Orders

• (1120)

It is fine to bring forward this legislation that would let Canada meet its international obligations, but the government needs to put teeth in the bill. We need money to make sure we can enforce the legislation. I hope the government can respond and indicate why it made this cut to Canada's offshore surveillance of foreign fishing vessels and what effect it thinks it will have. Gutting DFO and taking a significant amount of money away from offshore surveillance was wrong, and I hope the government will re-think that and many other cuts it made at DFO.

The government has downloaded extra costs to our fishers such as tags, at-sea observers, and logbooks. It has made changes to quotas and taken them from fishers to pay for scientific research, which should be the responsibility of the Government of Canada, not fishers. It has made drastic cuts to DFO science, fisheries, and conservation officers; the Coast Guard, and small craft harbours. I has ignored the price crisis in the lobster fishery and has spent nearly a year considering whether it should eliminate the owner-operator and fleet separation policies.

However, I am pleased to say that we are generally quite supportive of the bill the government has brought forward and of Canada's ratification of the port state measures agreement.

As I mentioned earlier, Bill S-3 has three points: to implement the port state measures agreement, prohibit importing illegal fish and marine plants, and clarify administration and enforcement powers in the act.

The bill contains a number of amendments to the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act so as to implement the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization 2009 agreement on port state measures to prevent, deter and eliminate the unreported and unregulated fishery.

On November 22, 2009, a conference of the FAO approved the port stage measures agreement. Canada signed the agreement on November 19, 2010, but has yet to ratify it. The amendments to the act and regulations are necessary for Canada to meet its commitments to this important international agreement.

The agreement will enter into force 30 days after 25 countries have ratified it. I believe 11 countries have currently ratified the agreement and another 18 have signed on with the indication that they will ratify this agreement. From my understanding, government officials are hopeful that the PSMA will enter into force in one or two years.

The application of the port state measures act would contribute to harmonizing port state measures, would enhance regional and international co-operation, and would block the flow of illegal, unreported, and unregulated fish into national and international markets.

Enhanced port state control can act as a disincentive to those who take part in illegal fishing by increasing the cost of their operations. For example, if they are prohibited from coming into one port, they will have to find another port, and their costs will increase. Hopefully, we will have something in place to make sure they do not enter any port. That is what this agreement is all about.

The FAO described the port measures agreement by saying this:

The Agreement aims to prevent illegally caught fish from entering international markets through ports. Under the terms of the treaty, foreign vessels will provide advance notice and request permission for port entry, countries will conduct regular inspections in accordance with universal minimum standards, offending vessels will be denied use of port or certain port services....

Information will be shared among the countries that have signed.

IUU fishing poses a considerable threat to the conservation and management of many fish stocks. It can lead to the loss of economic revenue, impair the conditions of the stock, or at worst, can have a stock collapse. This is something we in this country need to be extremely vigilant about and guard against.

Liberals support the main thrust of this piece of legislation and support sending Bill S-3 to committee for review. I do wonder why the government signed the port state measures agreement in 2010 and has waited four years before bringing this legislation to the House. Perhaps the government could shed some light on that.

• (1125)

Over the next number of years, there is going to be a major demand for fish products. It is estimated that the world cannot supply the demand for fish and protein that will be needed in the world in the next 25 years. That is why it is so important that governments invest in the protection of our fish stocks, our fishers, and the safety of our fishermen. As I mentioned, the downloading of tags, at-sea observers, and logbooks, all these costs go against our small fishermen.

There has been a slashing of the small craft harbours budget. At one time it was over \$200 million and now it is under \$100 million. I know the government announced \$40 million over two years. I do not know when that will come, but I can assure the House that in the area I represent it is very much needed.

There have been many other major cuts at DFO over the last number of years. By 2017, it will amount to about \$300 million. DFO just cannot afford this type of slashing.

It is awful hard for me to understand certain things. Number one, the government needed to bring this piece of legislation forward, but just before it did, it cut \$4.2 million from offshore surveillance. This will mean that NAFO sea days will be cut, as I said, from 785 to 600 days; the air hours will be cut from 1,000 to 600; and the employees who are desperately needed, not only there but in many other places, have been cut by 23 in this particular cut.

That is only a small amount that has been sliced out of DFO. As other speakers have indicated, we have cut search and rescue offices on the east and west coasts. Any sensible human being would think that on the coasts there would be search and rescue offices, but obviously the government does not agree that they should be on the east coast and off the coast of British Columbia. These are things that are so important and we need to take a strong look at them.

Government Orders

Again I say that it is important that Bill S-3 goes to committee. Liberals would support it going to committee, where we will be evaluating it. However, the government must realize that if it is going to put anything in place in order to work with countries around the world, we have to take care of ourselves. We cannot be continually slicing, cutting, and gutting the departments in charge of making sure we are observing. If we do not have the planes out to keep an eye on the foreign fishing vessels, how are we going to know what is going on? How are we going to know what vessels are coming in? We will not.

The fact is—and I am sure the Minister of Foreign Affairs fully agrees with me—that we need to put more money into this.

Hon. John Baird: I agree with him on everything.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Mr. Speaker, we need to do this in order to make sure we are able to catch the people who illegally fish. Indeed, the Minister of Foreign Affairs is very concerned about the constituents in Cardigan, and they know that.

In all fairness, this is a vital piece of legislation to deal with the world community, but we have a big job here at home. We cannot continually slice and cut the very requirements that we need in order to enforce this type of legislation. I hope the government will take a strong look at that.

• (1130)

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to raise one point. I know he and other members have referred to supposed cuts to DFO's enforcement powers, but the figures they are using are not accurate.

I wonder if he knows that DFO has sponsored the fourth annual global fisheries enforcement training workshop. That is important because we need to realize, in the context of this issue, that fishing takes place on the high seas, outside of the 200-mile limit of any country, as he alluded to in his comments, and there is IUU fishing taking place there. This agreement would help regulate that fishing. If there is no place where fishermen can legally land it, eventually the illegal fishing will dry up.

However, a greater percentage of the illegal fishing actually takes place within the 200-mile limits of largely developing countries. Canada is playing a very significant role in the training of other jurisdictions because countries around the world look to us as a good example in terms of protection, conservation, and enforcement. That is a good thing, and I think he would agree with me on that.

I would ask him if he thinks there are any specific areas that would require amendment in committee, so that we can begin to think about those.

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Mr. Speaker, I have great respect for the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. I also appreciate that we are still able to host a global training program for whatever part of the training we would be providing for the world community. However, as I said, my concern today is that I think that chance is dwindling because we are firing experts all the time. It is impossible to understand the rationale behind it. I think it is great that we have the expertise, but I wonder how long this would take place.

We had a world-renowned Experimental Lakes Area in northern Ontario that cost the government \$1.75 million, and it cut it. The world community uses this research. We have some expertise left, and it is great that we do, but if we continue to fire or eliminate the scientists—those people who know what is happening in the fishing community in this world, the people who are renowned worldwide—if these people are no longer on our payroll under the Canadian government in DFO, we would not be able to provide the good program that the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans has just indicated.

What I was trying to indicate to the House and to the people is that to be able to keep these programs in place, as well as keep the respect internationally, we have to be able to take care of ourselves at home. We will not be able to take care of ourselves if we continue to slice DFO and continue closing the offices on the east and west coasts. We cannot continue on this track.

• (1135)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, naturally, the people of Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher are concerned about the environmental situation with respect to waterways and fisheries.

I would like to remind everyone that the week-long Great Canadian Shoreline Cleanup begins this weekend across Canada. I encourage all of my colleagues and constituents to come out in force for this event.

I am often in touch with Ciel et Terre, an environmental group that organizes the shoreline cleanup each year. Recently, a member of the group told me that he was very worried about overfishing, and rightly so.

Does my colleague believe that Canada is doing its fair share to tackle and eliminate this problem, particularly given that illegal fishing is contributing to the problem?

[*English*]

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Mr. Speaker, I would like to first congratulate and thank my hon. colleague. Taking care of the environment is so important, and I thank all the people who are doing that. We need to be more aware. Cleaning up our coastlines is so important.

I agree with the member, and as I touched on earlier, when the Experimental Lakes Area was hit by the government, it was impossible to believe that the likes of that would happen. It was a renowned area. Most everything we drink, clean the floor with, liquids or invasive species, no matter what it is, worldwide, was dealt with in the 57 lakes in the Experimental Lakes Area, and I might add that it still is, but no thanks to the present Government of Canada. It had to pull out for the sake of \$1.75 million.

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If my hon. colleague recalls, the government also started tearing down the buildings. However, we made a little fuss and I believe that stopped. My understanding is that one or two of the buildings have been destroyed, which is too bad, but we did get that stopped.

If we are to meet and deal with the world community, we have to do our share, but we have to do our share in this country. This legislation is important. We have to deal with it and comb through it in committee, but it deals with meeting requirements. We have to meet the requirements of DFO in this country. That is all I am saying. The legislation is excellent, but we have to meet the requirements in this country for surveillance and safety. One of the most dangerous jobs in the world is deep sea fishing. The government needs to realize that and put the money where it is needed.

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not live on the coast. I live in Ontario. The freshwater fishery in Ontario is a very important part of our economy. There is always a need for resources for surveillance, to make sure there is not overfishing or illegal fishing.

I also believe that this legislation is important. However, I would like to ask my colleague to expound a bit on the importance of having resources, and this means dollars, to do the surveillance so that the billions of dollars in value that are being lost can be protected

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Mr. Speaker, the Great Lakes fishery is a vitally important fishery in the country. We deal with it at committee. One of the issues in particular that is so important is invasive species. We cannot deal with these issues unless we have the funds to observe what is coming in and going out of the Great Lakes.

The problem that I see, and the problem that my colleague from Kingston and the Islands has, is that the continual gutting and cutting of DFO means that we do not have the people in place to observe for invasive species that can come into my hon. colleague's riding and into the Great Lakes. If we do not have the required investment in the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, or with the Government of Canada, we cannot make sure that these very important fisheries in the Great Lakes are preserved. I again urge the government to make sure it takes a long look at the loss there would be to our economy.

• (1140)

Mr. Erin O'Toole (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the member for Cardigan, for his speech here in the House today. There was a lot of history to his speech. He talked about long past triumphs, so I have to talk about my personal history.

When I was in the air force, I had the pleasure of serving on HMCS *St. John's* and actually participating in some of our fisheries enforcement measures, along with fisheries officers who would come on the ship. Our Sea King crew would be on the Flemish Cap patrolling our exclusive economic zone. We saw some of those trawlers out there. It is important that we enforce our sovereignty.

We support the industry. I have a personal history that keeps me passionate, and that is why I support Bill S-3 fully.

I have two questions for the hon. member. The first one is based on the port state measures agreement. Does he not agree that it is important for Canada to be part of that and to update global definitions related to fishing vessels, fishing, and that sort of thing, to make sure we address the modern fleets out there?

Second, the member spoke a lot about our small fishermen. These are some of the hardest working Canadians. I have seen them firsthand. Does he not recognize that our European trade agreement presents the most exciting opportunity for Atlantic Canada in a generation? Tariff rates in the double digits would drop for the lobster and mussels that I know his province sells well. Is that not a boon for our industry?

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. parliamentary secretary for his intervention. I appreciate the boats he was on. The only problem is that he arrived here the day the Conservatives formed a majority government. My concern is that the day he leaves there will be no boats. There will be nothing.

My concern is, and I am trying to inform the House, that the path this majority Conservative government is on is one of total destruction. It does not seem to understand the value of the fishery, particularly on the coasts.

He did indicate the importance of Bill S-3 and the port state measures agreement. Of course we agree with the port state measures agreement. However, we are not doing what we need to do in our country to protect our own fishermen and to make sure we know what is going on out in the sea, that we know what boats are out there. We need patrols.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as always, it is an honour to speak in the House on behalf of my constituents from Surrey North.

I come from British Columbia and along the coast we have many families and fishermen who are supported by the fishing industry. The bill is extremely important to British Columbians and many people living in my constituency.

The bill would require Canada to ratify the UN Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing, which Canada signed in 2010. I know that my colleagues in the House agree that this is a good bill and a sign of being part of and working with the international community to not only preserve but manage our fishing resources. The agreement was signed in 2010, yet it took the Conservative government four years to bring the bill to the House.

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Not only that, members will notice that the bill begins with an “S”. For people listening at home, that means the bill was introduced in the Senate, the unelected, unethical, unaccountable Senate. I would have preferred it if the bill was introduced here in this House, which is represented by the people. It is a small issue but I do want to point it out.

Illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing undermines sustainable practices of legitimate fishing operations, including those in Canada, and presents unfair market competition for sustainable foods. That is the issue. There are estimates from a number of different studies that point out the economic loss worldwide due to pirated fishing ranges from \$10 billion to \$23 billion annually. This represents approximately 40% of the catch.

Commercial fisheries in Canada contribute about \$5.4 billion in economic activity in this country. Not only that, it generates approximately 71,000 jobs across this country, on the west and east coasts.

There are a couple of issues that I want to point out.

One issue is on conservation, because fish are not unlimited. We know that this is a limited resource. Obviously, we must make sure that we regulate and prevent this illegal, unregulated, unreported fishing in order to ensure the sustainability of this resource, which provides many jobs not only in Canada but worldwide. It is a source of food that is valued across nations, so we must work with other countries to ensure that this resource is sustained.

The other aspect is that not only do we have to manage and ensure sustainability but we also have to enhance fishing stocks. How do we do that? There are many ways, and I will get into that. However, the record of the current government in regard to ensuring the enhancement of the fishing stocks and the environment has been terrible.

We have heard in the House of the cuts that are being made to Fisheries and Oceans Canada and to surveillance. It is fine and dandy to bring in a bill to ensure that we would protect the fishery from illegal and unreported fishing, but if there is no substance or teeth to the bill, how would we ensure that the law would be implemented? What we have seen from the Conservative government over the last three years that I have been here, and before that, is cut after cut to the very people who enforce these laws and regulations.

● (1145)

In the House today, someone pointed out that there was a \$4.2-million cut to surveillance. However, I heard the parliamentary secretary say that it was not that much. How much is it?

Even the Parliamentary Budget Officer has tried to get information from departments in regard to where the cuts are and who they are affecting. However, under the current government, government departments, whether it be Fisheries, the military or Defence, are all refusing to provide information to the Parliamentary Budget Officer. On one hand the parliamentary secretary says that the cuts are not that much. How much are they? Let us know. Let Canadians know how much the cuts are to these departments.

I talked about sustainability. We have seen cuts to the environment. For example, 99% of our lakes, 99% of our rivers have been removed by the Conservative government from the Environmental Protection Act. On one hand, yes, we are trying to ensure we are protected against illegal fishing, unreported fishing and we curtail it. On the other hand, we need to ensure we provide environmental habitats for these fish to flourish and to come into our rivers. However, we have seen cut after cut in these areas where the government is failing to protect.

We have seen another side of things from the Cohen report. I come from British Columbia. This year we had a bumper crop of fish coming into the Fraser River. It was estimated that 26 million came into the Fraser River. In other years, we do not see as many fish coming into British Columbia, and that is because the government has made cuts to scientists. We need to understand what the oceans are all about. However, the government has not only made cuts to the scientists who study the ocean to find out about fish habitat and fish behaviour, it has also eliminated a number of facilities that monitor these kinds of experiments.

The Cohen report talked about fish coming into British Columbia through the rivers. We have seen that one year we get so many fish and another year we do not get as many. In order for us to protect our fishing resources, to protect and ensure that we understand the fish, we need to invest in science. We need to invest in enforcement. However, time after time we have seen the government shirk its responsibility in regard to ensuring the well-being of our families. It should ensure not only that the jobs being provided are protected today, but are protected in years to come, generations to come.

That is how ones works with the international community to ensure treaties like this are actually implemented, so I do commend the implementation by the House of the treaty to protect unregulated, illegal and unreported fish. We need to work with the international community to ensure more countries sign on to this treaty to ensure its implementation. There are only a handful of countries that have signed this, and we need a minimum of 25 countries to ensure that this is implemented.

Working with the international community is something the government has lost. I'll give you an example. Fish do not see boundaries. They travel around from one country to another, one ocean to another. Therefore, we need to work with other countries, but the record of the current government has been horrible.

● (1150)

There was a time when we were viewed as peacemakers. Canada was viewed as a country that would bring others together, but that is not the case now. I will give a prime example of that. In the history of the UN Security Council, we have always had a seat on a rotating basis. We ran, and other countries supported our position and voted for us to be on the Security Council. For the first time in the history, the 50-odd years, of the UN Security Council, the government did not even want to run a candidacy for that seat because it knew we would not get the support of other countries to have that rotating seat on the UN Security Council.

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That is the government's record. On the other hand, the NDP leader was the Minister of the Environment in Quebec. He has worked with environmental organizations. He has worked for the sustainable development of our resources. I can assure the House that the leader of the NDP will work with the international community to ensure that we have sustainable fisheries, sustainable resources, not only for this generation but future generations.

I would encourage not only the Minister of Foreign Affairs but also the Prime Minister to work with other countries, to encourage them to sign this treaty so that we can sustain this very valuable resource for Canada and its future generations.

We have talked about this a little, but in order for us to implement this law, we need tools and people, initial resources, as well as surveillance tools to detect unreported, illegal, and unregulated fishing. However, we are seeing cuts under the government. Not only that, we have seen cuts to the scientific community. The government is cutting scientists who would help us enhance the fisheries and their related jobs and products. It is muzzling scientists. The government is not even letting them talk about some of the issues and problems we are facing and how we could solve those problems.

On one hand we need to protect managed fisheries, and on the other hand we need to enhance the fisheries. We need to enhance the habitat and ensure it is protected. Under the current government, 99% of our lakes and rivers do not have environmental protection.

On one side we need to make sure we do not have illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing, because we need to preserve and sustain those fisheries. On the other hand, we also need to enhance and ensure that we provide a place, a habitat for the fishing stock to grow. For that, we need to make investments in habitat, science and other resources that will provide that habitat for fishing stock to flourish.

Under the Conservative government, time after time we have seen cuts to our fishing resources and to the environment. Earlier I heard my colleague from Quebec talking about the east coast, and how we need to provide security and safety for the fishing vessels, the brothers and sisters who go out on the rough oceans to fish. It is a very dangerous job. We need to provide enhanced security for them in order to ensure that they bring in their catch.

● (1155)

I heard from my Quebec colleagues earlier and read in newspapers that sometimes when fishing vessels in rough waters on the east coast phone for help, the call is picked up somewhere in Italy.

I am from the west coast of Canada, and even I do not understand the accent in the Maritimes. We need local people. I have colleagues from Newfoundland, and they have a distinct culture. We need to ensure that we do not send their distress calls overseas where their language will not be understood.

On the west coast we have seen cuts to the Kitsilano Coast Guard. My colleague from New Westminster—Coquitlam pointed out that two hovercraft are out of commission now. On the one hand, cuts are being made to services that are required to support our fishing industry. One the other hand, we are not providing protection for fish in our rivers to make those fisheries sustainable over a long period of

time and taking steps to protect them against unreported and illegal fishing.

I would encourage the government to work with other nations, bring them on board, and provide the leadership role that the government has not provided in other areas. We saw this not only last year when we lost a seat on the UN Security Council but in other areas where it failed to provide that leadership.

On this side of the House, we have a number of issues with the bill that have been pointed out already. We hope that the government will listen to some of the amendments that we will offer to ensure the bill has teeth and will protect fishermen and communities and jobs in this country. I am hoping that amendments would be entertained at committee stage. Over the last number of years, we have seen many amendments to enhance various bills.

Sometimes the Conservatives rush bills through with typos in them. We have seen a number of bills at committee stage that Conservatives were told were unconstitutional. We pointed out at committee stage that the crime bill and a few other bills would be ruled unconstitutional, yet the Conservatives failed to take that into account. They not only failed to take that into account; they simply refused to entertain some of the recommendations that the opposition parties had. Those recommendations were based on facts, science, and legitimate concerns from communities and stakeholders.

I am not going to get into facts and figures, because the Conservatives do not believe in them. They do not believe in science or concrete numbers, so I am going to leave that for another day.

In summary, this is a good step. Hopefully we will get some amendments at committee stage to enhance the bill.

● (1200)

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I listened to the last two speeches, I realized that it is clearly time to set the record straight.

The member for Cardigan talked about the Experimental Lakes Area. It is now being run by the International Institute for Sustainable Development and will continue to provide world-class science. I would make the point that \$18 million is being spent to rehabilitate Lake Winnipeg. That is real, on-the-ground environmental work. That is what this government believes in: on-the-ground environmental work.

When members on the other side criticize our environmental record, all they talk about is process. This government is actually doing things to rehabilitate and remediate the environment.

I would also note that in 2010, under this government's watch, there was a record Pacific salmon run, and in 2014, again under this government's watch, there was another record Pacific salmon run. I notice how those members never talk about the actual fish and what is going on in the environment.

I must also make this point. The member for Cardigan complained about the low price of lobster. The price of lobster is low because lobsters are extremely abundant.

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My friend across the way talked about habitat enhancement, completely neglecting to mention that this government put \$25 million into the recreational fisheries conservation partnership program, funding 400 habitat enhancement projects across the country.

My question for him is this: is he against local angling and fisheries conservation groups doing on-the-ground conservation projects?

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, I will tell the House what the Conservatives' record is on the environment, and it is not hidden: 99% of the lakes and 99% of the rivers have been taken out of environmental protection. That is the Conservatives' record.

With regard to the run of 2010 and the run on the Fraser River of this year, we have had good runs in those two years. Is it because of the Conservatives? I can assure members that the fish were not listening to the Conservatives' calls to come into the Fraser River.

What we need is sustainable, long-term planning and management of fisheries. The current government has failed. It has cut funds to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. Before the last election, the Conservatives announced the Cohen commission to study where the missing fish went in British Columbia, yet none of the recommendations from that commission have been implemented by the Conservatives. The report has been sitting on their table for over two years.

●(1205)

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Surrey North spoke very well about the importance of investing in our fishery, about investing in the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, about investing in enforcement and science and habitat. I wonder if my hon. colleague can comment about whether the government is adequately investing in those areas of our fishery.

While some amendments may be necessary, we all agree that the proposed legislation in front of us is a step in the right direction. However, the investment that is needed and that the government should be providing to our fishery across the country and on the west coast is completely inadequate. Could my hon. colleague comment on that aspect?

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, that is a wonderful question.

Somehow the Conservatives think that this fishing business is only one year at a time. Let me remind them that we need a long-term strategy in order to ensure that we have fish not only this year but also four years from now, ten years from now, twenty years from now. We need sustainable management of fisheries.

This bill is a good step toward working with other countries. Fish cross boundaries, rivers, and international boundaries. We need to work with other countries to ensure that bills like this one are implemented. However, we need to provide resources for that, and we have heard in this House that the Conservatives have made cuts to the very surveillance that is required to ensure that illegal, unreported, unregulated fishing does not occur. It hurts our economy and our families when those resources are depleted by this unregulated, unreported, illegal fishing.

Under the current government, we have seen cut after cut to fisheries and to the environment, whether it is on the habitat side or on enhancing our fishing stock. The government has not even implemented a number of reports that it commissioned in order to ensure we have a long-term sustainable fishery. All we have are the yearly investments that the Conservatives pretend they are making.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, to return to the actual bill, Bill S-3, and the implementation of international measures to stop the importation of illegal and unregulated fishery products, I wonder if the hon. member for Surrey North would agree with me on something in “Prohibition—importation”, under proposed section 5.6. It says:

No person shall import any fish or marine plant knowing it to have been taken, harvested, possessed, transported, distributed or sold contrary to...

It then lists a number of laws.

We heard earlier from the parliamentary secretary that the definition of “fish” would be changed to ensure that it includes processed fish, as opposed to only fish that have just been caught in the nets.

I hope this law will work to stop the massive injustice of using slave labour, literally slaves, on the fishing fleets of Thailand. Far offshore, they catch the majority of the fish meal that goes into the equally environmentally and horrific practice of shrimp aquaculture throughout Thailand.

This is one of the most ecologically devastating practices, as it begins with clear-cutting mangrove forests. I think that doing something to protect the mangrove forests while at the same time ending the practice of slavery on the high seas would be a legitimate application of this treaty.

●(1210)

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the member in regard to the definition of “fish” that is being proposed by the Conservatives. I hope that we could look at that in detail at the committee stage.

I have mentioned before that the Conservatives usually do not entertain legitimate concerns from the opposition. I hope that they will look at this bill in detail to ensure that the bill has the teeth to implement its purpose. I hope that the Conservatives will entertain some of those concerns.

We should absolutely all be concerned about labour practices, not only here in Canada but around the world. We should be co-operating with other countries to ensure that labour and environmental practices are in line to ensure that we have long-term, sustainable fisheries not only for Canada but around the world.

As I said before, fish do not see borders. They do not see one ocean or the other. They swim all across the world, so we need to ensure that we work with other countries and our partners. Unfortunately, I am quite doubtful about whether we can do so under the Conservative government.

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I can assure members that the Leader of the Opposition works with countries around the world to ensure that we have long-term, sustainable practices in place to ensure long-term prosperity in Canada's economy.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Northwest Territories.

Bill S-3 would amend the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act to implement the port state measures agreement. This is largely a housekeeping bill that so Canada can ratify the UN Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing, which Canada signed in 2010. The purpose of this agreement is to prevent illegally caught fish from entering international markets through ports. It is an important agreement and it is important that Canada ratifies it.

Canada's NDP support the bill at second reading, but we intend to introduce several amendments at committee stage to strengthen it. We feel legislation like this should be introduced in the House, not in the unelected, unaccountable and still under investigation Senate, as my colleague mentioned.

Canada should be a world leader in encouraging policies that promote healthy oceans and sustainably managed fisheries.

I would like to talk about the international commitments approved by the Food and Agriculture Organization, the FAO, of the United Nations in 2009. Twenty-six countries plus the European Union have signed on to this agreement and it will take effect once 25 states ratify it. It is important that Canada ratifies this.

I would like to offer some background information about pirate fishing, illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. It is a major concern. It is a major problem threatening the health of the world's oceans. Pirate fishing fleets are difficult to hold accountable. They obscure their identity. They fly flags of convenience. They are profit-driven and their owners are savvy, wealthy business people who know how to evade detection. As well, their workers face hazardous conditions and slave wages.

Let me offer a few global statistics in illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing. It causes an annual financial loss of about \$10 billion to \$23.5 billion. It accounts for up to 20% of all wild marine fish caught. Pirate fishing produces 11 million to 26 million tonnes of seafood annually. These are alarming figures. It is important that Canada does what it can to stop illegally caught fish from entering markets through our ports.

My colleague from Surrey North spoke about elements of the fishery. He spoke about the Cohen inquiry. He also spoke about the lack of resources that the government had put into the fishery and the fact that it had actually taken away from the fishery. I would like to talk about another important element of the fishery, and that is sharks.

IUU fishing is an issue I became familiar with while working on my private member's bill to ban the import of shark fins to Canada. Shark finning is strongly tied to illegal fishing. Over 100 million sharks, many of which are threatened and endangered, are illegally caught every year for their fins. That is an alarming and huge number.

It is surprising to see Conservatives so keen to tackle IUU fishing, yet most Conservative MPs could not bring themselves to stand up to the PMO and vote in support of my shark fin bill at second reading last year. It lost by five votes, a very close vote. With the overwhelming support of Canadians who supported this, this should have been a no-brainer for many Conservative members. Across the country many felt that the legislation should have been passed quickly so it at least could have gone to second reading and on to committee stage. It is very unfortunate that did not happen.

It is important that Canada tackle global shark finning. As I mentioned, 100 million sharks each year are killed, many for their fins alone, and many are threatened and endangered. One-third of all shark species is threatened with extinction due to shark finning. Evidence of pirate fishing fleets that return to ports with boatloads of shark fins has proven this is an incredibly tough task and that countries need to invest in resources to tackle this problem.

● (1215)

Shark finning is a prime opportunity for Canada's government to take a leadership role in the global fight against IUU fishing. One way we can combat illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing for sharks is by encouraging all countries to adopt a fins-attached policy. Although we do not have a problem with shark finning in Canadian waters to a large degree, many would be surprised to learn that Canada's shark-landing policies are not as strong as they should be. I am hopeful the government will follow through on its promise to introduce stricter shark fin import regulations, yet its silence on this issue has been deafening for me. I have tried over the months to not only contact members, but also the CFIA to see how it is moving forward with the promise the government made to improve regulations.

This is the critical element and the heart of what we are talking about today, proposing amendments to legislation like this. It needs the commitment of the government to go forward with making changes not only in the legislation but in the resources needed to ensure we are able to make changes in illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

Let me talk about some of the other pressures of global concern on oceans and our wild fisheries. We certainly have an all-party oceans caucus at the House. We are tackling this issue by coming together to look at some of the issues that threaten the health of our oceans. The all-party oceans caucus is playing a very positive role.

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I have intimate knowledge of the Fraser River, one of the world's greatest salmon rivers, located in my home province of British Columbia on the boundary of my riding of New Westminster—Coquitlam. It is an important fishery. It is an incredibly important river. We expected a large return this year, but, as members have pointed out, if we look at these runs pre-contact, they were normal. We have seen a trend downward. Even though we think 20 million to 26 million is a large run, pre-contact there were runs of 100 million sockeye to the Fraser. Therefore, we have to keep it in context. Real fundamental issues must be looked at which require science and enforcement.

There are other pressures on our oceans, such as warming waters and ocean acidification. I want to mention that we have the Bacon and Eggheads breakfast coming up on Thursday next week. The topic will be “Ocean Acidification: the other carbon dioxide problem”. I encourage all members to go to this important meeting to hear and learn about ocean acidification. This is another issue that our fishery is facing.

Oil spills, large and small, from tanker and marine traffic are another problem that threaten the health of our fishery. Our scientists would argue that the oil spilling into rivers and storm drains that combine into creeks and rivers and then into larger rivers and eventually into our ocean is a huge problem, as well as the oil from tanker traffic around the world and in our oceans in Canada.

Pollution threatens the health of our oceans, such as industrial waste. We are familiar with what happened at Fukushima a few years ago. Nuclear waste entered into the ocean, and is bringing debris and material over to our coast. The oceans are connected and there is quite a link. Some would argue that we really have one ocean, but our oceans are definitely connected.

● (1220)

There are certainly garbage islands. The gyre has been reported in the ocean and is an increasingly huge problem with the amount of plastics facing our fishery.

These potential impacts, including those from aquaculture, are all playing a key role in monitoring and taking care of our oceans.

In summary, the threat of the IUU, or the illegal, unreported and unregulated, fishing is important. We need to address this legislation in committee. We need to address pirating fisheries and tackle it together, but we cannot forget investing on the resources to tackle that problem.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate my colleague's comments on this, especially given the region he represents and the work he has been doing in the House and in his riding.

Mr. Speaker, as I am sure you are aware, and I know my colleague is already aware, the leader of the NDP is very knowledgeable when it comes to the environment and the important relationship between environmental protections and a healthy fishing industry in Canada.

The New Democrats think this bill is going in the right direction. However, there needs to be a couple of amendments. We are concerned that the bill came out of the Senate, but we think we can play a very important part in strengthening the legislation.

Could my colleague elaborate a bit more with respect to the need to consider regulations that are similar to the EU which would require all fish and seafood products entering the Canadian market to be certified and their origins traceable? How important is that?

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, that is really a two-part question.

One is that certification is very important. How we label, approve and certify fishery products is critical. How those products enter the country is really important. As I mentioned in my speech, the amount of fish that is being caught in the illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing industry is huge. Therefore, certification is critical to allow consumers to know what they are actually consuming.

The member also mentioned the leader of the NDP being committed to a well-managed fishery and ocean. We are talking about the importance of fundamental protections to the environment and the ecosystems, which then provide jobs and spinoff benefits for tourism. Millions of dollars are invested in tourism each year, providing thousands of jobs. This is all connected to a well-managed fishery and ocean. It provides food for many first nation communities along the Fraser River.

As my colleague mentioned earlier, we need to take a long-term view of managing the fishery, not this short-term view that has put us into this problem.

● (1225)

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague has worked in the area of dealing with the problems of illegal fishing as it relates to sharks and the horrible practice of shark finning. Could he elaborate to some degree on whether he sees this bill as having any impact on that whatsoever and whether, having had conversations with government members, he sees any urgency for government to try to deal with that unfortunate practice?

Mr. Fin Donnelly: Mr. Speaker, I mentioned in my speech the importance of healthy oceans and sharks and that the illegal practice of shark finning does occur, unfortunately. It takes so many sharks out of the water. Sharks are top predators and play a key role in balancing and maintaining the health of our oceans.

The private member's bill I put forward went to a vote last year and failed, unfortunately. We had a commitment from the government that it would change the regulations. Unfortunately, there has been no action on that. I am very concerned about that. I have talked with members on the other side. I have been very keen to hear what has happened since that vote and that promise to address the regulations, but I have not heard anything. I really hope the government will act on it. I believe it has heard strongly from Canadians from coast to coast to coast about the importance of this.

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This is connected to the issue of illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. If we were to see a commitment, it would really be on issues like this, like shark regulations or banning the import of shark fins. These are serious commitments the government could play a part in.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Northwest Territories, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to stand up and speak to this particular bill.

In my time in Parliament, this has been a new approach the Conservatives have taken of bringing forward bills through the Senate, which is supposed to have a sober second look at the bills that we create. We are putting the cart before the horse, in many ways. It is really unfortunate that the Conservative government has chosen to make this change in parliamentary procedure. Making appointed people the standard-bearers for government bills is completely inappropriate.

This is a housekeeping bill that gives the government the authority to ratify the UN Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing. It was signed in 2010, and we are getting around to it, which is great.

It regulates foreign fishing vessels fishing in Canadian fisheries waters and harvesting sedentary species on the continental shelf beyond Canadian fisheries waters. That is good.

It also extends the application of the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization regulatory area and prohibits specific classes of foreign fishing vessels from fishing for straddling stocks. The act also prohibits fishing vessels without nationality from fishing in Canadian or NAFO waters. All these things are good.

My concern in regard to fishing, and the concern I bring today, is about our Arctic Ocean. Measures like this are needed in the Arctic to protect fish stocks now and fish stocks that we really do not understand very well at all from overfishing in the near future.

Climate change is rapidly melting permanent ice in the international waters of the central Arctic Ocean, an area as large as the Mediterranean Sea called the "Arctic donut hole". The Arctic donut hole is the area within the Arctic Ocean that does not fall within any national boundary. It is open for any type of exploitation by foreign fishing fleets.

Until now, the ice that has existed has blocked large-scale commercial fishing vessels, but with currently limited scientific data and no management measures in place, commercial fishing could pose a major threat to an ecosystem already stressed by dramatic warming.

We see things happening around the world in northern waters. Iceland and Britain are fighting over mackerel stocks that are moving into different locations in those waters.

In the summer of 2007, 40% of the Arctic donut hole was open water. In the middle of the Arctic Ocean, where there is no regulation and there are no territorial waters, 40% was open and could have been vulnerable to overfishing.

Mobile fleets of large factory processors range the world for fish and other sources of marine protein. For example, factory trawlers

from Chinese ports travel 12,000 kilometres to catch krill near Antarctica. It is only 8,000 kilometres from China to the part of the central Arctic that was ice-free in 2007.

Today we heard the government say that it was not too concerned about the Arctic. It does not think anything is going to happen there. Wake up. The government needs to wake up and realize that the world is short of protein and it is going to go wherever there is protein available.

In 2011, a senior researcher from South Korea's government-run Korea Maritime Institute said that "Arctic fisheries can become the centre of world fisheries in the near future". He extolled their potential to not only meet Korea's high demand for fish when there are declining stocks elsewhere but to rescue the Korean fishing industry from its financial troubles.

The researcher said:

In the near future, the thawing of the Arctic Ocean will influence the fisheries by creating more fishing opportunities...

...[T]he Arctic Ocean coastal states and other states like China, Japan, and EU have competitively established and announced their development policies for the Arctic including those related to fisheries....

...it is no doubt an opportunity for the Korean fishing industries as well as those who are seeking new fishing grounds abroad due to diminishing fishing resources....

Usually international fisheries are regulated through agreements like NAFO.

● (1230)

In the 1980s, unregulated fishing by Poland, South Korea, Japan, and other countries in the international waters of the Bering Sea severely undermined pollock stocks in just a few years. Russia and the U.S. persuaded these nations to sign the Central Bering pollock agreement to close this area to fishing until scientific data and management measures could ensure a sustainable approach.

There is currently no international fisheries organization like NAFO covering the Arctic donut hole, which is precisely why some fear overfishing there. There is, however, an international body that considers sustainable development in the Arctic within its remit. Moreover, it counts aboriginal peoples as permanent participants. It is, of course, the Arctic Council, which Canada right now is the chair of.

Six years ago, the U.S. began discussions on creating a fisheries management regime in the Arctic donut hole. Canada has not used its chairmanship of the Arctic Council to support and accelerate these talks. This is required.

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Interestingly enough, when our Prime Minister goes on and on about Arctic sovereignty, he does not take into account that in 2008, the U.S. put a fishing moratorium on the largest disputed area in the Arctic, which is some 7,000 square kilometres in the Beaufort Sea. The U.S. is setting itself up to take those waters away from us by doing the work that needs to be done in that area. They have also put environmental regulations in place in that area. How is that going to stand up in an international court? It is going to favour the U.S.

A key element is to ensure that commercial fishing levels are initially set at zero. It is important to set down the commercial fishing levels until reliable scientific data is available.

Over 2,000 scientists from 67 countries have recently signed an open letter calling for a precautionary moratorium on commercial fishing in the high Arctic. They believe that this moratorium should remain in place at least until it is better understood what kinds of fish swim in the central Arctic Ocean, how many of them there are, and how they can be managed sustainably.

The United States and the European Union have adopted policies recommending no commercial fishing in the Arctic donut hole until new international arrangements can be negotiated. Where are Canada's interests being expressed here?

In the disputed area in the Beaufort Sea, Canada was silent. The U.S. went ahead with the moratorium in that area, setting themselves up for taking over that area and taking over the Canadian interests in that area.

That is what is going on right now in Arctic fishing. Where are we in this Parliament in dealing with that issue? Where are we taking the steps, when we have the opportunity as chair of the only organization that encourages international co-operation by governments that have a stake in the area, the Arctic Council?

Oh, we are setting up an Arctic economic council. We are trying to encourage business development in that area, which is fine, but should we not put the environmental concerns we have in the area first? Is it not a logical progression to set good environmental standards, to ensure that we understand what the fishing stocks are, and to move ahead with the kinds of things that are going to protect that region before we put our efforts into an Arctic economic council, which is going to push forward on resource development, shipping, and perhaps fishing as well?

What the current Canadian government has done on the Arctic Council, with the concurrence of other nations, because they have gone along with it, is create a dynamic problem for the environment in the Arctic. We have taken away the focus we had on the Arctic Council to deal with the environment first and foremost, and that is going to play out in the fishing industry as well.

• (1235)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by saying that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl. I will have approximately 10 minutes to speak to Bill S-3, An Act to amend the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act, which will implement the port state measures agreement.

For those at home, this may seem very technical. I will try to explain what sort of impact this bill will have. I am looking forward to speaking to it, especially since I was recently appointed as a permanent member of the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans. Colleagues who preceded me on this committee have had the opportunity to discuss this topic, so I will have to dive right in and get caught up on what has been happening recently in committee.

The NDP's position is simple. We will support this bill at second reading. This bill originated in the Senate, and I would say that it is constructive. However, that does not change the NDP's concerns and thoughts on the Senate. Senators are unelected. We are talking about an international agreement and changes to legislation that will allow us to finalize these international agreements that were signed many years ago. In my mind, it would have certainly been appropriate for the government to take on this file and ensure that it moved forward, but it decided to go through the Senate. That is highly questionable. However, the fact remains that the bill before us is, for the most part, very constructive.

This bill is primarily administrative. It is intended to allow Canada to ratify the port state measures agreement to deter and eliminate illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing, approved by the United Nations. This agreement was signed in 2010. It will affect port inspections. Bill S-3 adds to the current law, restricting the import of illegally purchased fish and marine plants, and it clarifies certain provisions concerning the administration and enforcement of the legislation.

The bill includes a number of things that could be very beneficial to and important for Canada. My colleagues are already planning to bring forward some amendments in committee after it passes second reading. From what I understand, they are quite reasonable. I hope this will not prevent us from continuing to work constructively on the bill so that all parties will be in agreement by the time it reaches third reading.

Illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing undermines legitimate fishing operations. A perfect illustration of this is the Atlantic cod fishery, which spiralled way out of control.

Thousands of families made their living off of cod fishing for hundreds of years, but now there is not enough stock to allow those thousands of families to do so again. There is a lot of confusion about the fact that a big part of the problem comes from illegal fishing that may have taken place off the east coast.

Another issue that is very important where I come from is eel fishing, specifically elvers. In the 1980s, Fisheries and Oceans Canada issued a number of experimental licences to fishers in New Brunswick. They were fishing for elvers, which are basically young eels. They are really popular in some Asian cultures. A small jar, approximately the size of a small peanut butter jar, is literally worth a fortune on the international market. Those licences became commercial in the 1980s. The legal amount that fishers from the maritime provinces were allowed to catch went from 28 kg to 9 metric tons. This is approximately 55 million baby eels a year. Imagine how many tonnes of adult eels we would have had if fewer baby eels had been caught.

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●(1240)

Beyond the nine metric tonnes allowed, 220% to 250% of the fishery is allegedly illegal, which is one of the fears that stakeholders constantly share with us. People are not fishing nine tonnes, but perhaps 20 to 23 tonnes illegally, not just somewhere off the maritime provinces, but in New England. The equation is simple: such a tonnage of baby eels equals a gigantic tonnage of adult eels that will never mature and end up in the nets of Kamouraska's fishers.

In Kamouraska, eel fishing is an important traditional practice. On the bank of the St. Lawrence, hundreds of families set up long nets that end in a heart shape. The fish enter and turn into the heart at high tide, then the families collect the fish at low tide. This traditional fishing is a local attraction because it is fun to watch. It also has an effect on tourism. Some smokehouses that have been around for over 150 years are having trouble finding eel to smoke. They have existed for generations. We are starting to wonder whether eel fishing will completely disappear from Kamouraska one day.

Therefore, illegal overfishing off the east coast of North America affects even the roots and oldest traditions of Quebec families in Kamouraska. That is why a bill like this is important. It is one of the main reasons I wanted to speak to the bill today.

Eel stocks dropped so much that in 2009, the Department of Natural Resources brought in a voluntary licence retirement program for commercial American eel fishing along the estuary. The program's goal was to halve the mortality due to fixed trap fishing, which I explained earlier. Individuals who were doing something completely legal are being pressured to decrease their activity by half because people hundreds of kilometres further east are fishing illegally.

Let us come back to the substance of the agreement. Once Canada ratifies the port state measures agreement, we will have to assume a leadership role and encourage other countries to also enforce this agreement. The example of elvers is always relevant, since a great deal of the illegal activity in this area happens in the United States. A similar bill is currently working its way through the American legislative system, but we should encourage our neighbours to work quickly, because this is a global issue. The agreement requires 25 signatories in order for it to work. If some signatories are vigilant while dozens of other countries continue to turn a blind eye to illegal fishing, that will have a negative impact on overall fish stocks, in spite of the steps Canada will have taken in the right direction.

I would like to clarify some aspects of the bill for the people watching us at home. What exactly is included in the port state measures agreement? The agreement stipulates that foreign vessels must notify the port and request authorization to enter. The authorities will then have to conduct regular inspections in accordance with universal minimum standards. This is the type of measure that seems so obvious that it is surprising that a bill has to be passed to implement it. One would think that such a measure would have been clearly set out somewhere in legislation decades ago. It is surprising, but at least we are moving forward.

Among the many changes the agreement would implement, two seem particularly worthwhile to me. First, the bill broadens the

definition of fishing vessel to all vessels used in transshipping fish, or marine plants, that have not been previously landed. Just because a boat is not a fishing vessel does not mean that it will be allowed to transport illegal fish products. That just makes sense, and it is important that this is clear.

Second, the bill broadens the existing definition of fish to include shellfish, crustaceans, marine animals, and any part or derivative of any of them. I would like to point out something that I found very surprising. It is clear that the members opposite are going to vote in favour of this bill.

●(1245)

We asked for protection for sharks because a large number of fins has been found on boats. There was smuggling going on.

However, when we tried to have a bill passed on this issue, we lost the vote. We needed only five more votes. The members opposite did not offer enough support. It is a bit strange to see them moving forward on this issue when they refused to accept our proposals regarding sharks.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, what I like about the bill is the fact that it highlights the importance of international agreements or treaties. Canadians and my colleagues from the east coast have a fairly decent understanding of the amount of overfishing that has taken place around the world. There is a great deal of concern about fish stocks and their preservation.

The port state measures agreement is an attempt to try to deal with this very serious world problem. Would the member comment on his reference to the issue of demonstrating leadership? Canada can and should be playing a strong leadership role on this issue. Having adopted the port state measures agreement says something in itself. I believe there are about a dozen other nations that have already done so. Could the member comment on that?

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for the question. It is kind of like asking whether I am for or against apple pie.

I believe that our political adversaries across the way view the issue from slightly different angles. These agreements will address environmental priorities. Indeed, we are talking about the environment here.

When I joined the Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans, the first study was on the worrisome state of the shrimp stocks. I was previously talking about cod stocks.

My colleague is right. If we want to get results and maintain fish stocks and the fishery everywhere, in the Atlantic Ocean and the Pacific Ocean, then every country with a large fishing fleet has to sign treaties. For the Atlantic Ocean in particular it is very important for all the nations involved to sign agreements. We must ensure the sustainability of the cod and shrimp stocks there. It is essential.

Government Orders

•(1250)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I really appreciate my colleague's comments.

He talked about our leader, who truly understands the challenges related to the environment and the repercussions they have on our fisheries.

This bill is just the first step in a process to prevent illegal fishing. Once Canada ratifies the port state measures agreement, we will have to take a leadership role on this.

We must also encourage other countries to follow suit. It is not enough to say we have done our part and then disregard what others are doing. During meetings with representatives from foreign countries, we must ensure that they take a position on these issues and implement regulations.

I have a question for my colleague. We know the repercussions illegal, unreported fishing has on businesses. We have to do more than just introduce bills. We must also go ahead and enforce penalties once they have been established. Far too often they are established, but not enforced.

Would my colleague like to say a few words about that?

Mr. François Lapointe: Mr. Speaker, what my colleague said is true.

We must show leadership, but in cases such as this one, there can be difficulties. I am thinking of this government's leadership. For example, meetings were held recently about water supply. The government withdrew. It decided not to attend. Why? Because there is a lot of water in Canada?

However, if tomorrow morning there is no more water in the southern United States and farmers there do not produce fruits and vegetables anymore, we too will suffer. Strangely, the Conservatives withdrew from these meetings.

This type of behaviour can be detrimental when we are examining a bill such as this, which is constructive and should be passed. Recently, there has been a lack of leadership on many other files.

Everyone knows how much I respect the leader of the official opposition. I know him and have worked with him for a long time. In my opinion, he is the best person to restore and even improve the reputation that Canada enjoyed previously, increase our contribution and ensure that many partners—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. The hon. member for St. John's South—Mount Pearl.

[*English*]

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as one of the seven members of Parliament for Newfoundland and Labrador, representing the east coast Newfoundland riding, the great and beautiful riding of St. John's South—Mount Pearl, I make sure I take every opportunity to speak on our once-great fisheries, to speak on what were once the richest fishing grounds in the world: the fabled, storied, legendary Grand Banks of Newfoundland.

When Newfoundland joined Canada in 1949, Canada was elevated from 14th to 6th place in the world as a fish-exporting nation.

In his 2013 book *Empty Nets: How Greed and Politics Wiped Out the World's Greatest Fishery*, Gus Etchegary writes how Newfoundland presented Canada with the golden gift of her fisheries. Today, those fisheries are but a shadow of what they once were. I wrote an endorsement on the back of Gus Etchegary's book. The endorsement reads, "The rise and fall of the world's greatest fisheries is a crime of the highest order, and Gus Etchegary shows his mettle in telling the tale. He is the ultimate fighting Newfoundlander."

In 1992, the federal Conservative government of the day and John Crosbie, who was the federal fisheries minister of the day, shut down the northern cod fishery. The shutdown of the northern cod fishery was described at the time as the biggest lay-off in Canadian history, throwing 19,000 people directly out of work. It was compared to the prairie dust bowl of the 1930s. The moratorium that was announced in 1992 was supposed to last two years. It has been 22 years and counting. The province has lost 90,000 people since then. They are gone, most of them never to return.

The fading of our traditional fisheries is having an impact on our heritage; it is having an impact on our culture. To simplify on that impact, how long will we sing of squid jigging grounds, when there are no more squid to be jigged? There has been a modest recovery in groundfish stocks such as cod, but the offshore stocks are still absolutely decimated. The point that I raise now should bring home the gravity of the fall of our fisheries and how far we have fallen. For most of the year, it is illegal for a child to jig a cod from the end of a wharf, to jig a cod from the North Atlantic Ocean. Can members fathom that?

Over the years, the fishing effort has been transferred from groundfish such as cod to shellfish such as shrimp and crab, but both those stocks are in steep decline. On top of that, the biggest cuts to the quotas we have left are to our inshore fleets, meaning that our coastal communities—those we have left—are still taking a pounding.

Management decisions from 2,000 kilometres away, here in Ottawa, are not based on the principles of adjacency or historical attachment; that phrase means that those closest to the resource are the ones who benefit from the resource. No, that is not what is happening. Conservatives ignore those principles in favour of big offshore companies, most of which have foreign ownership. Managing the Newfoundland and Labrador fisheries from Ottawa has resulted in a lack of understanding, a lack of consideration, and a lack of communication. Given all that has happened to our fisheries, to the Grand Banks—the collapse of the stocks, unchecked foreign overfishing, the wipeout of entire domestic fleets, the layoff of tens of thousands of workers, and the loss of almost 100,000 Newfoundlanders—the biggest policy change over the past 22 years has been the decision by the federal Department of Fisheries and Oceans to eliminate the double-hook jigger. Instead of a jigger with two hooks, they can now only use a jigger with one hook. That has been the most substantial fishery policy change in years. It is absolutely unbelievable.

It is in this context that I speak to Bill S-3, a housekeeping bill.

Government Orders

• (1255)

Bill S-3 would amend the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act. We support this legislation. The bill is required. It is necessary for Canada to be able to ratify the United Nations Agreement on Port State Measures to Prevent, Deter and Eliminate Illegal, Unreported and Unregulated Fishing. Canada signed the agreement in 2010. It should be noted, however, that this UN agreement can only come into force after it has been ratified by 25 nations, and it has yet to be ratified by 25 nations.

It goes without saying—although I will be saying it now—that illegal, unreported, unregulated fishing undermines the sustainable practices of legitimate fishing operations, including those in Canada, including those in Newfoundland and Labrador, and presents unfair market competition to sustainable seafood. It makes sense. We cannot disagree with that.

However, this legislation is only the first step in preventing illegal fishing. Once Canada ratifies the port state measures agreement, we must then take a leadership role in encouraging other nations to move forward on this agreement as well. Good luck with that. Hopefully it will work out better than NAFO, the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Organization, which monitors fishing on the high seas outside Canada's 200-mile limit off Newfoundland and Labrador on the Grand Banks. NAFO is useless. NAFO is toothless. NAFO is a joke.

While there has been a moratorium on fishing in Canadian waters since 1992, for too many of those years it has been a free-for-all outside the 200-mile limit. Fishing in Canadian waters stopped dead in the water. It stopped completely. For the first time in 500 years it stopped, but fishing outside the 200-mile limit continued. The funny thing about migratory stocks such as cod is that they do not pay any attention to imaginary lines in the ocean. The 200-mile limit means nothing to a fish. We stopped fishing, but foreign nations continued.

Even today, if a foreign nation is cited for illegal fishing outside the 200-mile limit on the Grand Banks, it is up to the home country of the foreign trawler in question to follow through on court action or penalties. How often has that happened? How often is the book thrown at a foreign trawler by its home country for ravaging what is left of what were once the world's greatest fisheries? How often does that happen? It never happens.

I cannot tell the House how many times, as a journalist and as a member of Parliament, I filed federal access to information requests to try to find out what penalties have been imposed on a foreign trawler cited for illegal fishing. How many times have I filed a federal ATIP? I cannot tell the House how many times. The government has denied the release of such information. Why? It is because it says that it may jeopardize international relations. What about Newfoundland and Labrador relations? Where do we fit in?

John Crosbie was the Progressive Conservative minister in 1992 who shut down the northern cod fishery. He shut it down and he brought in the aid package after that. It was a great big fat welfare package. John Crosbie once wrote, "Who hears the fishes when they cry?" He was a funny man. The better question is who hears the fishermen when they cry.

I refer back to Gus Etchegary's book *Empty Nets: How Greed and Politics Wiped Out the World's Greatest Fishery* and I quote:

I wrote this book because I, like a few others, refuse to accept that this once huge, renewable resource cannot be rebuilt to play a role in the economy of Newfoundland and Labrador and provide a source of food for an increasing world population.

Truer words have never been spoken.

I support this housekeeping bill, but make no mistake, let there be no doubt, let this be beyond the shadow of a doubt: our fisheries and our coastal communities need a hell of a lot more protection than this.

• (1300)

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know where to start.

One of the issues that my colleague brought up was the favouring of corporate issues and corporatism when it comes to the fishery, which we have not seen in a long time. In this particular case, when it comes to shrimp allocation, it is quite obvious now that those being favoured are the corporations with the larger boats.

He also talked about outside the 200-mile limit. Fish overruns in the case of turbot or Greenland halibut, as it is known, amount to 60% to 70% by foreign nations. Inside the 200-mile limit, the measures by which we conserve the species are much greater.

The member has indicated that he supports this measure. Beyond this particular piece of legislation, what needs to be discussed in the House to adhere to all of the inefficiencies that he so eloquently talked about?

Mr. Ryan Cleary: Mr. Speaker, the member brings up a good point in terms of shrimp. I mentioned in my speech that the fishing effort that had been on groundfish, such as cod, has been transferred to shellfish, such as crab and shrimp. Now we are seeing those stocks decline.

The most recent news is from earlier this year, and it is a decision that we and everybody in the fishing industry support. Scientists announced the decision that the shrimp quota must be cut. However, there is an imbalance in the cut. Most of the cut is to the inshore sector, versus the big business offshore.

What I saw first-hand in the member's riding in Newfoundland and Labrador in the summer, in places like Fogo Island, is that the cut to the inshore shrimp quota is going to have a devastating impact on our fleet and on our communities.

As for the broader question about what needs to happen, in my opinion, what we need is a fisheries revolution. We need a revolution in fisheries management. The status quo does not work. It does not work for the fish stocks. It does not work for Newfoundland and Labrador.

Government Orders

• (1305)

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate hearing from the member. He has, as he indicated, a fair bit of a experience writing about the fishery and the collapse of the northern cod off Newfoundland and Labrador and the east coast. He talks about the failure of the Canadian government, and globally, to deal with the problem of foreign overfishing.

Here, we are talking about illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. I wonder if I could suggest that the member has indicated that he feels less than confident that the government is showing the kind of urgency necessary to deal with the serious problems in terms of overfishing and illegal fishing and the impact on the ecosystem and local fisheries on the east coast and throughout the coast of Canada.

Mr. Ryan Cleary: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for the excellent question and for his great work in the fisheries and oceans portfolio.

I am not just less confident in the Conservative government; I had no confidence in Liberal governments and administrations before the current government.

The 200-mile limit off the east coast of Canada was established in 1977. That was a mistake. It is great to have a 200-mile limit, but in the case of the east coast of Newfoundland, what we should have had was a territorial limit to the edge of the continental shelf. It should have gone out beyond 200 miles, but it did not, even though the Liberal prime minister of the day promised that it would happen. As a result, we have the absolute decimation of migratory stocks and offshore stocks such as cod.

In terms of my confidence in the Conservative administration to turn around the Newfoundland fishery and to attend to the interests of the Newfoundland fishery in terms of basic principles like historical attachment and adjacency, as I outlined in my speech, I have no confidence. We see management principles like LIFO, last in first out, implemented in the shrimp industry by the Conservative government. These principles hurt our province. They hurt Newfoundland and Labrador.

It is not good enough. It has to change. We will see a change and the impact of these bad decisions in 2015. There will not be a Conservative elected anywhere near where I am from. That will not happen.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to participate in this debate on Bill S-3. As has been clearly stated, this is a very important issue. It is one issue of many dealing with the ocean's ecosystem and issues of conservation and stock management that needs to be seriously considered.

It has been suggested that the bill is a piece of housekeeping legislation in that it is meant to help ratify the port state measures agreement that was signed at the UN back in 2010. It would have to be ratified by 25 nations before it would come into effect.

One would think that Canada, with the longest coastline of any country in the world and with important fisheries on all our coasts, including the Arctic, would show some leadership on this issue and would underline the problem by bringing it forward with some urgency and some import.

However, the government introduced the bill through the Senate. Many of us have suggested that introducing legislation through the Senate is like introducing it through the back door. It indicates that the government thinks it is something that should be dealt with but that is clearly not wholly important. It is not something the government wants bogging down its agenda.

The bill was dealt with in March 2013 by the Senate. It passed third reading in March and was ready to come here, but then the Conservative government, in its wisdom, decided to prorogue the House in the fall, which meant that legislation died on the order paper. It had to go back through the Senate again. It had been Bill S-13 and had to be reintroduced in the Senate as Bill S-3. Now here we are in September 2014, and the bill has not even passed second reading. Undoubtedly it will, later on this afternoon, but it appears to me as a legislator that the government is not taking this issue seriously enough.

In the whole question of illegal, unreported, unregulated fishing, it has been estimated that tens of billions of dollars in economic value are being lost as a result of the practice of nations around the world taking and selling fish and thus undermining regulated markets. It is something that has been going on for centuries.

There is no doubt that the IUU fishery does threaten ocean ecosystems and sustainable fisheries. It violates conservation and management measures, such as quotas and bycatch limits. It is important to recognize that, and there is an attempt internationally to try to control how the signatory countries, the fishing countries, go about fishing these stocks.

We have a lot of science in this country, although if the Conservative government gets re-elected, there may not be any left. However, there is lots of work being done around the world in terms of monitoring the patterns and health of fish stocks to determine the levels at which the individual fisheries should be prosecuted so that the fishery is sustainable.

• (1310)

If we allow millions of tonnes of fish that are subject to those conservation measures to be taken out of the water without any control, then it defeats the purpose. As was suggested by my colleague from St. John's South—Mount Pearl, there is some question as to the efficacy of those conservation management measures to control how nations prosecute the fishery.

Nonetheless, here in this country commercial wild capture fisheries, aquaculture, and fish and seafood processing contribute upward of \$5.4 billion in total GDP and 71,000 equivalent full-time employment positions to the country's economy. It is a big deal, and we must do our utmost to work on this issue.

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New Democrats have indicated their support for the measures provided in Bill S-3 because they are part of an international agreement and because we think Canada should be a player in establishing the rules and regulations on the international stage on something as important as the fishery. Some of us would like the Government of Canada to take a much more aggressive role so that we would be much more involved and much more heavily engaged in taking a leadership role on this issue.

My colleague from Northwest Territories talked about the problem with the Arctic donut hole, and that is a real problem. That area is unregulated by international agreements, and some foreign nations are beginning to go into that area and fish at will. They are setting up historical fishing patterns that will have an impact when there is some kind of international agreement that affects that particular area. Canada has not played a role there and, I suggest, will suffer as a result.

I will talk for a few moments about the port state measures agreement, the international agreement to which Canada is a signatory and which Bill S-3, once passed, will cement. It states:

The Agreement aims to prevent illegally caught fish from entering international markets through ports. Under the terms of the treaty, foreign vessels will provide advance notice and request permission for port entry, countries will conduct regular inspections in accordance with universal minimum standards, offending vessels will be denied use of port or certain port services and information sharing networks will be created.

It is the first global treaty focused specifically on the problem of illegal, unreported, and unregulated fishing. I missed the comment from the parliamentary secretary earlier, but I understand there may be up to a dozen nations that have signed on. However, it is important to understand that 25 nations must sign on and ratify it through legislation, as we have, in order for it to come into effect.

Bill S-3 provides regulatory power in relation to authorizing foreign fishing vessels ordered to port by their flag state to enter Canadian waters to verify compliance with law or conservation and management measures of fisheries as an organization. The bill expands the definition of "fishing vessel", which we have heard, to include any vessels used in the transshipping of fish or marine plants that have not been previously handled. The bill expands the current definition of "fish" from shellfish, crustaceans, and marine animals to include any part or derivative of them.

● (1315)

We are going to talk more about some of those issues in committee because, on this side, we have some issue with the process and with what authority our Canadian officials would have to carry out those inspections. It appears they would need to get a court order, a warrant, in order to be able to move in to inspect the contents of a ship, a plane, a warehouse, or whatever. Any vehicle or structure used in the trans-shipment of fish or fish products is allowed, but the question is how that will happen. What are the provisions and the authorities that would be allowed? We need to understand that aspect better.

There is another part to that. The bill adds a number of new provisions under which a justice may hear applications for a search warrant, a warrant authorizing a protection officer to seize something, or a forfeiture order. We will want to seek some clarification of that. We will do that at committee.

On this side of the House, we have seen the commitment from the Leader of the Opposition. As a result of his experience on environmental issues, he understands how important ocean health and the ecosystem of our oceans is in terms of how the fishery is conducted and what it means to the overall health of our planet and our environment. As members on this side have intervened in this debate, we have heard them raise concerns about the government's commitment on issues such as conservation, habitat management, and questions of science.

As an example, when I look at the added responsibilities of Department of Fisheries and Oceans officers under Bill S-3, I wonder how they are going to be able to carry them out, given the cuts to their staff over the past three years under this government. Hundreds of millions of dollars have been cut out of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans. We have seen a reduction in the number of vessels available to the department and to officers to carry out surveillance and to apprehend, and we have seen a reduction in the ability of our coastal agencies and our navy to be able to help out. The ability of the Coast Guard to intervene is certainly in question as a result of the damaging cuts the government has made.

Likewise, we question the government's commitment to ecosystems, to fisheries management, and to measures to enforce those issues.

We have seen cuts to the inspection staff. We have seen cuts to the rules with respect to legislation and regulations governing what can appropriately be conducted on a lake, a river, or the ocean and we have seen the impact it will have on the fishery and the ecosystem. What the government has done over the past three years will have a detrimental impact on our ability to maintain a sustainable fishery on all our coasts. It will affect these fisheries and it will affect the ability of the people who prosecute these fisheries to do so in a safe and healthy way. It will affect the ability to ensure that families and communities are able to prosper, not only now but well into the future. That is what the whole idea of a sustainable fishery is.

● (1320)

We heard members talk about what happened last spring with northern shrimp. The government weighed in on the side of the corporate fishery, in particular on the side of the big factory trawlers, against the small fishery, the coastal and community fisheries. The result has been, and will be, the loss of hundreds of jobs, not only for the small boat fishery but also in the processing that goes along with this in a number of communities throughout northern Newfoundland and the south coast of Labrador.

Government Orders

That is why some of us are asking questions and raising concerns about the government's commitment with respect to the fishery and ensuring that we have a sustainable fishery. We need to do everything in our power, not only within our purview but within the areas where Canada and the Canadian government have an impact, to protect the environment and ensure the fisheries and those oceans are healthy and we have a sustainable fishery. The government needs to actively participate in a leadership capacity in those international bodies that set regulations, conservation and other management measures, such as quotas and bycatch limits. It needs to ensure that not only are we managing the fishery properly within Canada, but that internationally we are doing everything we can to ensure fishing is sustainable so we do not lose that as a result of overfishing, bad management and driving species out of existence. That is happening far too often already. We need to do a better job with this.

Let me reiterate a couple of points about Bill S-3. I am disappointed with the way the government introduced these provisions. This was an international agreement signed by Canada in 2010. We are now in 2014 still dealing with the legislation. Why is that? That is because government first introduced the bill not through the House of Commons, not through the front door, but through the back door. It came in through the Senate. The Senate dealt with it in the spring of 2013. That bill ended up dying on the table because the government prorogued the House in the fall of 2013. This does not give us a sense that the government understands the urgency of this problem and will move quickly to deal with the issue.

The whole question of the illegal, unreported and unregulated fishery is a serious problem. Canada needs to be at the forefront of measures like this to ensure this agreement is ratified by at least 25 nations and that we get the job done. Then the government will need to put the resources forward to ensure we can properly enforce the agreement and do everything we can within the powers of our country and of Canadians to ensure we do our part to stop the illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

• (1325)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my hon. colleague on his speech.

He mentioned that 15 countries have signed the international agreement. It seems that the waters off Canada's coasts are like the Wild West. We have seen our Prime Minister try to take the lead on international issues, such as the Islamic State and Ukraine. We have also seen him actively seek out markets for Alberta's oil from the oil sands. However, I do not see him assume that kind of leadership when it comes to the fisheries, resources or the bread and butter of thousands of fishers living in eastern Canada.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about the international leadership role we should be playing to ensure that the 10 remaining countries sign the treaty as quickly as possible.

• (1330)

[English]

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, I would agree with the member that Canada has much more work to do to be an international leader in the area of healthy oceans and of doing what needs to be done to ensure we properly manage the way we interact with the oceans, whether that be through the fishery or through natural resources.

We have to understand that if we further desecrate the ocean, continue to pour acid and allow the balance to change, limiting our ability to see fish, other marine life and plant life grow in the oceans that contribute to our atmosphere and healthy world, it will be to our disadvantage. As a progressive country that has the longest coastlines in the world, we should be at the forefront to ensure that best measures are brought to bear and carried forward to maintain a healthy ocean.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonaville—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I know my colleague's party is supporting this issue as a small step in the right direction when it comes to many of the issues that he touched upon, particularly conservation and the management principles that are used throughout the Department of Fisheries and Oceans.

One of the things the Liberal government introduced was the marine protected area. I apologize if this is not germane to the issue at hand, but is worthy to note that the marine protected area mechanism does a great service to our coastline, and not only ours but throughout the world. However, it seems that other countries are far ahead in progressing with marine protected areas.

Could the member cast his opinion about how badly we have been performing when it comes to these MPAs?

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, marine protected areas are extraordinarily important as a way of managing our ecosystem and ensuring healthy oceans. In fact, Canada signed on to an international agreement that would commit us to having 10% of our ocean in a marine protected area by 2020. We are now at around 1% as opposed to countries like Australia and states like California that have surpassed that.

This is an extremely important measure. We need to tie marine protected areas together on all our coasts. That is the way forward in managing a healthy ocean and ecosystem. It certainly is a commitment that the official opposition has made and will continue to make in 2015.

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the bill focuses on illegal, unreported and unreported fishing, but what we are really talking about is a commitment to the fishery to manage our fishery properly and sustainably. We want to see, and the member spoke about this, a well-managed and properly funded fishery.

Does my colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour feel the government is actually committed to providing the funds necessary for legislation like this?

Government Orders

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, this is something I spoke about a bit because in so many areas, whether it be the lack of commitment the government members showed supporting that member's bill to stop shark finning, or the work that needs to be done in the Arctic on the Arctic donut hole to ensure we get some international control over fishing in that area, or the failure to respond to the Cohen Commission report on the Fraser River sockeye, at every step the government has shown that it is not committed to a sustainable fishery and a healthy ocean.

We are rightly concerned. While we support the legislation, the intention of participating in an international agreement to stop the illegal, unreported and unregulated fishery, we are concerned that the government will not provide the resources to ensure this is properly enforced.

• (1335)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskaing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are pleased that the bill adds significant new powers for the minister to share information with other countries, fisheries, management organizations and international organizations related to authorizations of vessels, inspection of vessels and enforcement action taken. It is a key change, and it will help the international community better track and monitor illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing.

However, my colleague raised a really important concern with respect to the changes in section 7.1, and rightly so. He also raised some concerns about the fact that the bill came out of the Senate.

Let us not forget why we have the concerns. We can look at the two crime bills that were recently passed in the Senate, one of which was the wrong version. I would like my colleague to comment on that.

The fact is this bill is so important, yet a lot of members of the government, because only one government member has spoken, refuse to engage in the debates. This impacts our economy and the bottom line for consumers.

Could the member elaborate a little about his concerns on the bill coming out of the Senate? We have seen that the Senate does not even know what it is doing when it is passing bills and the fact that the government does not even bother engaging on bills as important as this.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, I talked about the way this bill came in through the back door being a sign that the government did not care very much about it and did not think it was very important.

We saw it delayed by at least a year. This legislation is meant to ratify the international agreement that was completed in 2010. We are now in the fall of 2014, and we still have not done it.

The member raised an important issue, and that is the responsibility we have as members of Parliament to ensure that legislation does what it says it will do, that all the clauses work together and do not contradict each other.

Frankly, and I do not know about other members, I find it an embarrassment that legislation has gone through the process and is then found to be wrong and inconsistent with the Constitution. In

fact, in one case the bill that was finally concluded by the Senate was the wrong legislation.

We have to do a better job. The government has to do a better job at managing how we deal with important legislation.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to rise and speak in support of Bill S-3, an act to amend the Coastal Fisheries Protection Act. Before I start my debate, let me take a few minutes to congratulate my colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour for the stellar job that he does in representing his constituents here in the House, and also for the stellar job he has done in handling his file of Fisheries and Oceans. It is not an easy task to handle that file when we have a government that is so bent on taking away environmental protections and putting much of our oceans and waterways into jeopardy. Congratulations to him. The constituents in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour are very well served by their current member of Parliament.

I also want to take this opportunity to congratulate my friend from New Westminster—Coquitlam. For those of us who are from B.C., we know he is the Fraser man. He is the gentleman who swam the length of the Fraser River. He has also been a very loud and effective voice in the House, whether it has been about shark finning, the protection of our waters, or the saving of our Coast Guard, all critical issues to those of us who live on the coastlines, and I would say, to all Canadians. Both of these colleagues have done an absolutely amazing job of holding the government to account, and also of putting forward what I would say are effective policies and how to have good policies when it comes to our oceans and fisheries.

The bill that is before us is a very important one. As many colleagues have mentioned, I am a little embarrassed that the bill originated in the Senate. After all, it is the House of Commons that is supposed to build the bill, have it go through the process and then the bill goes to the Senate for the second sober look. However, the way the government has been handling some of the legislation recently would put into question that second sober look. Maybe we all need to be taking more time, slowing down and having meaningful debate during the legislative process instead of rushing through with legislation.

I will tell members why the bill is so important to Canadians and specifically to the coastlines, coast to coast to coast. The 2008 study, which I am sure every parliamentarian has read because we all know how important the fisheries are to us, estimated the economic loss worldwide due to pirate fishing ranges from \$10 billion U.S. to \$23 billion U.S. annually. That is a huge number and that is what the bill tries to address to a small degree.

Government Orders

Canada's commercial and wild capture fisheries, aquaculture, and fish and seafood processing contributes \$5.4 billion in total GDP and 71,000 in full-time equivalent employment to the country's economy. What we are talking about here is very significant, not only to protect the species and to make sure that we have fishing on an ongoing basis so that my children and great-grandchildren can fish our beautiful oceans and actually find fish there, but it is also because illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing equates to anywhere between 11 to 26 million tonnes of seafood caught illegally. That represents 40% of the total catch in some fisheries. That is scary. We know that in order to manage the fish out there, quotas are set. How can we set reasonable quotas for catching fish when we do not even know how much fish is being caught?

• (1340)

This goes to something that I really have to hit on here. The current government, never mind environmental protections that would lead to proactive caretaking of our fisheries, which it has failed on miserably, has also failed to provide fundamental protections because of all the cuts.

There are some very basic things. I have to talk about the cuts to the Coast Guard in Kitsilano. It is very important for British Columbians, putting the lives of many fishermen and also regular seafaring folk in jeopardy. However, we have also had cuts to the fishing department at a time when really we need to have more enforcement because so much illegal activity is going on. We also know the current government has very little respect for science or expertise and informed advice because we know it has an allergy to it and does not like it. We have seen that not only with cuts to science but in ignoring sound advice from scientists and experts. We have argued ever since I have been here over the kind of damage that is being done to habitat with the sweeping changes that the government brought in, buried in the budget bill of course, to habitat protection. That has put creeks in my riding, like the Bear Creek Park creek, into jeopardy. That in itself is unacceptable.

We have just so much work that has to be done in this area, and this is a baby step. Even though this is a baby step in the right direction, and we are supporting this baby step, my colleagues will have some amendments. This baby step has a few flaws in it, but we are counting on the Conservatives and their good will in wanting to see this legislation go through to pay heed to the very informed amendments my colleague from Dartmouth—Cole Harbour is going to be presenting at the committee stage. I know they just cannot wait to hear those amendments. We are looking forward to working on those.

We are also pleased to hear that the bill will have the government endorse a UN position, which is long overdue. As we know, the European Union, Norway, Sri Lanka and Myanmar have already ratified the port state measures agreement, and we are going to do the same. However, I am also hoping that our government will now persuade other countries to join this agreement. Once again, I despair at times because I am wondering what kind of an influence we really have left after the damage that has been done to our international standing by my colleagues across the way, whether that is with the Security Council or the fact that some of the positions we have taken have isolated us from the international community in different ways.

Let me summarize because I know there are going to be lots of questions. In summary, I would say that we will support this but there will be amendments. Let me urge the Conservatives to look at all the cuts they have made to Fisheries and Oceans and let us take some real action to protect our oceans and fisheries for our children and grandchildren. Let me once again recognize the work done by our member for Dartmouth—Cole Harbour and my well-respected colleague from New Westminster—Coquitlam.

• (1345)

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Newton—North Delta, which is the riding right next to mine, for that wonderful speech.

I know she has limited time and she touched upon this being part of a baby step. The bigger step is also working with other nations to bring them on board. I have talked about this before in the House. Fish do not know boundaries. They do not know international boundaries. They swim across oceans. Therefore, we need to work with other countries to ensure that illegal, unregulated, unreported fishing is regulated, in the sense that we can preserve our stocks.

Can the member talk about the Conservative record, whether the Conservatives could actually work with the international community to bring about a consensus, and how much damage they have done to Canadian legitimacy around the world?

• (1350)

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my esteemed colleague for his very thoughtful question. I would also like to take this opportunity to commend him on his speech earlier on this topic, which was very thoughtful and thought provoking. He summarized the key concerns that we have with the legislation and the government's track record when it comes to protecting oceans and fisheries.

To answer his question, I do not think I am saying anything that is breaking news. It is common chatter out there that Canada has lost its stature in the international arena, whether we look at a seat on the UN Security Council or whether we are a key player when it comes to some of the major challenges facing the world.

When it comes to the environmental sector, I am embarrassed by how the rest of the world views us right now because of the kinds of cuts and decimation the government has visited upon our oceans and fisheries, and I would say, on Mother Earth.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wanted to pick up on the idea of international agreements and how it is that our world's oceans can benefit from stronger leadership. Canada does have a significant potential role to play when it comes to protecting our oceans, given the amount of oceans along our boundaries, whether it be the Arctic, the Pacific, or the Atlantic.

It has been pointed out that this agreement was made in 2010. I believe that the first country to sign and ratify it did so back in 2010 and that about a dozen have now done so.

Government Orders

Would the member not agree that Canada could be playing a stronger leadership role, and that one of the ways to do that would be to act quickly when we have treaties of this nature put in place and are there to protect the oceans of the world?

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that we have lost some of our standing in the international community. The fact is that many other countries ratified the UN treaty straight away, but here we are. Four years later, it was not the House of Commons or the government that brought forward the bill. It had to be birthed in the Senate.

Absolutely, our oceans and the fish in them do not realize that they are crossing from the Canadian border over to the U.S. border. Therefore, international co-operation when it comes to our environmental issues and the sustainability of our fisheries is very critical for the future. If we fail at this, we do it at our own peril. Right now, Canada has an embarrassing record when it comes to environmental protection.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am really pleased to see the MPs on this side of the House actively participating in such a debate, while the parliamentarians on the government's side just sit on their keisters and do not bother weighing in on this very important issue.

With respect to the engagement that the government needs to undertake, let us look at countries such as Mexico, Spain and Panama, whose fishing vessels are known to engage in illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing. How important is it to show leadership and make sure that we reach out to those countries to ensure that our economies can all prosper, and that consumers and businesses are not made to pay the price?

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, many people have said this before me, but let me reiterate it. Our fisheries and oceans do not recognize boundaries. They are man-made boundaries.

If we are to surely protect our fisheries and our planet from environmental factors and overfishing, especially through illegal, unregulated and unreported fishing, the government has a critical role to play in making sure we get other countries to sign on to this. We could have all the policies in the world, but if we cannot persuade others to join us, I would say that we have failed to protect our fisheries.

However, in order to persuade others, we have to have a standing internationally, and people have to look at us as a player. Right now, we are not seen as a player in the international arena. That is so sad.

• (1355)

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, earlier one of my colleagues mentioned in his speech that there have been suggestions and amendments to the bill and they have fallen on deaf ears. I am wondering if my colleague could elaborate. Essentially this is a housekeeping bill, but we have made some suggestions. We want some comments on how we could improve this legislation

Could my colleague comment about how this legislation has come in through the Senate and how the government is responding in using the fisheries committee for hearing suggestions and comments and amendments to improve the legislation?

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, I have seen a pattern over the last three and a half years of this government paying little attention, actually none, to amendments being put forward by the opposition. I do not know what it is with the Conservative government. It seems so ideologically driven. It does not even want to hear the voices of the opposition on environmental issues, on issues that we should all be working on together. It is a pattern.

Even though we have reasonable amendments, there is a fear on this side of the House at least that we are going to be met with an iron curtain, that the government is not going to listen. With the Conservative government, it seems to be its way or the highway, and that does not make for good legislation. We had two examples during the summer, when the Senate found it was dealing with bills that were not quite apropos, and that is very disturbing.

Let us take the time. Let us pass bills that have been properly debated. Bills serve the country well. Legislation serves the country well when both sides of the houses work together to produce good legislation.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member has a valid point. It seems that whenever the opposition points out something that is egregiously wrong with a piece of legislation, the government fixes it but reaches out to someone else to take the credit for helping it along the way, including the Senate and many other interests and stakeholders outside of Parliament.

I do want to ask her a question with respect to a question that was brought up about an hour ago in debate. It pertains to how many interests in the fisheries are drifting now toward the corporate sector and how the Conservative government is favouring the corporate sector when it comes to basic management decisions over some of our most vulnerable species, including shrimp on the east coast and halibut and salmon on the west coast, of course, in her neck of the woods. I am wondering if she could comment on that.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: It comes as no surprise, Mr. Speaker, that the government across the way favours the corporate agenda. We have seen that many times.

We have small and medium-sized fisheries on all of Canada's coasts, and they are really worried about their future. I urge the government to take a look at that agenda. Let us start investing in Canadians for Canadian jobs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Statements by Members

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time and referred to a committee) [Translation]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

• (1400)

[English]

CHILDHOOD CANCER AWARENESS MONTH

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, September is Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, and I am wearing the gold ribbon to be part of the Gold Ribbon Campaign.

We do not often think about it, but cancer is the number one cause of death by disease among Canadian children, killing more of our children than all other diseases combined.

However, research is not keeping up, and the treatments for adults that nearly kill a healthy person, things like chemotherapy and radiation, can do permanent damage to the health of our young people, even when they recover from cancer.

The Gold Ribbon Campaign is asking for more research into childhood cancers, more ability to treat them in ways that allow the kids to really recover, and more help, more blood products for Canadian kids.

I wear my gold ribbon today thinking of Stephanie Simmons, who started this campaign in London, Ontario, and of my daughter's best friend Kaila Remillard, who succumbed to cancer years after suffering from it and whose mother also supports the Candlelighters campaign.

Let us help our children avoid cancer. Let us help them recover. Let us help them be well.

* * *

ONLINE TOUR OF PARLIAMENT

Mr. David Anderson (Cypress Hills—Grasslands, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every year we have the privilege of hosting constituents from our ridings. A highlight for many is their tour of the Centre Block, learning about the function, history, and architecture of Canada's Parliament.

However, many people are unable to visit Ottawa in person. In my office, we decided to do something about that. Today, I am delighted to announce that, for the first time, we can all tour Parliament without leaving home. My website, davidanderson.ca, now features a first, an online guided tour of Parliament.

Built on Google Street View technology, this virtual tour features 25 tour stops, including many places that the live tours do not go. Virtual visitors can step off the guided tour at any time and look around on their own. They can zoom in on interesting items and take their time exploring. Each stop has information relevant to it.

Today's students enjoy interactive learning opportunities. This website will be a useful resource for teachers and for all of us. I invite members of this House to check out this great new resource at davidanderson.ca.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Pierre Dionne Labelle (Rivière-du-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at a time when the fate of the Mirabel terminal is more than uncertain, my thoughts today go back to the expropriated people of Mirabel. I remember October 4, 1975. A few students, including myself, joined Jean-Paul Raymond and about 100 expropriated people who gathered behind the fences to helplessly watch the first Concorde land. Opposed from the start to their lands—the most fertile lands in Quebec—being sacrificed for the sake of progress, they were weeping at the loss of their heritage and identity.

Up on the platform, champagne in hand, Liberals Trudeau and Chrétien were celebrating the opening of this white elephant that was supposed to secure our growth for decades to come.

Today, when large-scale pipeline projects are threatening our lands, rivers, and oceans, let us remember the wisdom and visionary resistance of the expropriated people of Mirabel. We deserve development that respects our local communities and the environment, with a view to passing on a legacy to future generations.

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[English]

JULIAN BELANGER

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, after my election in 2006, the first person to join my team was Julian Belanger. It was not really a surprise that I asked him to come on board. He was smart, tech-savvy, and bilingual, and had a great grasp of current affairs and politics. In January 2006, Julian opened the Chatham office and ran it in a pleasant and professional manner.

People loved Julian. There is no telling how many he helped; it could be in the thousands. They would also come in just to visit, and even if the issue was not federal, Julian always took the time to help. His memory was profound and his dedication to the job was exemplary. Everyone liked Julian.

On Monday, September 8, 2014, we were shocked to hear of his passing.

To his wife Andrea and his three children Zara, Quincy, and Daphne, his parents Pat and Jean-Maurice, and to the rest of his family, we offer our most sincere sympathy and regrets.

We hold on to his memory, and we will always remember our extraordinary and gifted friend.

*Statements by Members***CANADIAN MUSEUM FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow, September 19, the Canadian Museum for Human Rights will be opening its doors in Winnipeg.

Championed by Winnipeggers like the late Israel Asper and his daughter Gail, who were instrumental in the development of the museum, it is the first museum in the world to be dedicated to the evolution of human rights.

Standing tall at the Forks in Winnipeg where the Red and Assiniboine rivers meet, the museum will provide a space for Canadians and those visiting from abroad to learn, remember, and start a dialogue on human rights.

Visitors will engage in their own human rights journey as they explore stories and historical events from different perspectives.

Culminating at the 24-metre-high Tower of Hope, the structure is a reflection of our shared past and belief in humanity for a better future. It is a space to inspire visitors and promote respect for others.

Winnipeg is proud to be the home of the Canadian Museum for Human Rights and to be celebrating Canada's continued commitment to human rights both at home and abroad.

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● (1405)

WESTERN UNIVERSITY HOMECOMING

Mrs. Susan Truppe (London North Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this weekend London will be painted purple. Thousands of Mustangs, past and present, will be in London to celebrate Western University's homecoming 2014.

I am proud, as the member of Parliament for London North Centre, to represent the Western community. From the world-renowned research and innovation, the Richard Ivey School of Business, and the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry to the Western Mustangs athletic program, Mustang pride is alive and well.

This year's homecoming will be capped off by the annual homecoming football game. This year, the Western Mustangs will take on the University of Toronto Varsity Blues. I encourage all Western University alumni to participate in homecoming activities, either in London or in their respective cities. They can also follow all of the homecoming activities on Twitter using #westernhoco.

Happy homecoming 2014, and best of luck to coach Greg Marshall and the entire Western Mustangs football team. Go Mustangs.

* * *

OFFSHORE OIL INDUSTRY

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Newfoundland and Labrador's offshore oil industry has turned our economy around. Oil has replaced the codfish as currency, although we must never turn our backs on the fishery.

While Alberta owns the oil beneath its soil, the Government of Canada holds ownership of oil beneath the sea, but the Atlantic accord outlines how Newfoundland and Labrador is to be the

principal beneficiary of the offshore oil and gas industry off its shores. However, we are not the principal beneficiary.

To date, the Government of Canada has realized a profit of almost \$1.7 billion from its 8.5% stake in Hibernia. The province has offered to buy Ottawa's stake, but the government has shown no movement. The Atlantic accord is clear. Newfoundland and Labrador is to be the principal beneficiary. When will the Conservative government start living up to that principle?

We have to make the most of non-renewable resource revenues. They will not last. As a have province, we are not asking for a handout but a follow-through on a deal that has been done.

* * *

VICTIMS' RIGHTS

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, tomorrow is an important occasion for me, for Canada's Parliament, and for victims across Canada. Tomorrow Bill C-489, the safe at home bill, comes into effect. I want to share this milestone with a victim and her family.

A few years ago, they came into my Langley office and told their story of a sexual assault. They lived in anguish when the sex offender was sentenced to serve house arrest right across the street from their home. The neighbourhood that they had once loved was now the place they dreaded to be, because their attacker was there. The mother, with tears, asked me why they should have to move, since they were the victims. That was a great question. Everyone should have the right to feel safe in their own home. This bill helps to ensure that victims' concerns are being heard and considered.

The safe at home bill is now the law because of the strong support from our Prime Minister, the justice minister, and my colleagues on both sides of the House and in the Senate. I thank them for working with me to make a stronger, safer Canada.

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MACLEOD

Mr. John Barlow (Macleod, CPC): Mr. Speaker, floods have devastated my community, but with aid of Canadians across the country, we came together to help our friends, our neighbours, and our families in a critical time of need.

These disasters impacted us profoundly. The scar will take time to heal, but it will heal. It will heal because of the people of southern Alberta, whose strength and resilience are a source of inspiration for all Canadians. Macleod is a riding built on hard work, innovation, and commitment to safe communities. It has a vision we share with our government: a strong, vibrant economy, lower taxes for Canadian families, and creating new jobs.

I am honoured that the residents of Macleod placed their trust in me to ensure their vision is heard in these halls and their spirit is reflected in the laws we create. I would not be standing here without my volunteers, the Macleod EDA, and the supporters who worked so tirelessly. To my family members, their unwavering love and support is the foundation on which I stand here today, and for that I thank them.

Statements by Members

●(1410)

*[Translation]***THE ENVIRONMENT**

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Climate Summit 2014 will be held in New York on September 23. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and U.S. President Barack Obama are welcoming all world leaders who care about climate change and want to propose solutions. I said all leaders who care about climate change, but not the Prime Minister of Canada.

The people of Drummondville have come together and will participate in the Climate March with thousands of people all across North America. I invite everyone to join us on Sunday, September 21, at 1 o'clock in Saint-Frédéric park for the Climate March in Drummondville. People in the Drummond area are sending a strong message: we must take action against climate change now and make our economy green and sustainable.

On Monday, September 22, which is also World Carfree Day, I invite everyone to consider our carbon footprint. Why not use more public transit and active transportation?

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*[English]***PRINCESS PATRICIA'S CANADIAN LIGHT INFANTRY**

Mr. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour today to rise to pay tribute to just one of our storied military regiments. The Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, or PPCLI, turned 100 this year. While known for its strength in western Canada, its origins are actually here in Ottawa. It was created by Captain Andrew Hamilton Gault in 1914, and its century of service afterwards has been inspiring.

In World War I, it fought at Vimy and Passchendaele. In World II, it was in Operation Husky, Sicily; Monte Cassino; and the liberation of the Netherlands. In Yugoslavia, the PPCLI was there for the tough fighting at Medak Pocket. In Afghanistan, in Kabul and Kandahar province, the PPCLI was there.

Three weeks ago, I was in Korea to see first-hand how, from school children to ministers of the government, they still remember and appreciate the sacrifice of the PPCLI in Korea in the Battle of Kapyong.

I am thankful for the PPCLI's century of service and sacrifice for Canada. While its motto was always "Once a Patricia, Always a Patricia", its members have always been some of our finest Canadians.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, summer is the season of family reunions, fun, and celebrations. However, for constituents caught up in immigration concerns, instead of happiness, it was the season of frustration and sadness as they continued to wait through long, extensive delays.

After our assisting hundreds of constituents with their immigration cases, many other temporary resident visas and parental and spousal

sponsorship applications were rejected, and some still remain unprocessed.

Despite the Government's promises about their constant reforms and improvements to the immigration system, the results still reflect nothing but improved justifications, false propaganda, and incompetence. After eight years of irresponsible governance, Canadians believe that the Conservative government is working harder only to protect the interests and well-being of its lobbyist friends and big corporations.

In 2015 we will fix this broken system, because Canadians have long waited for the change that will restore their pride and dignity and ensure their well-being. Canadians have put their trust in the NDP, and we will deliver.

* * *

UKRAINE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko, made a landmark visit to Canada.

I was proud to welcome President Poroshenko to our great country. His visit and address reflected the long-lasting friendship between our two nations as well as our mutual commitment to reinforce this relationship. The President stated that "Canada is the most Ukrainian nation outside of Ukraine."

Our government continues to demonstrate our unwavering support for Ukraine. The Prime Minister announced yesterday additional support for humanitarian aid to help the estimated 3.9 million people living in areas affected by violence as well as the nearly 200,000 individuals who have been internally displaced throughout Ukraine.

This is the support Ukraine needs, but it is the stability and prosperity of Ukraine that is our priority, and Canada is providing more military and economic assistance.

As the Prime Minister stated, "For us, this is not even just a matter of foreign affairs. This is a family matter and this is personal to Canadians."

Our government will not sit idly by while Putin tries to destroy Ukraine.

* * *

●(1415)

PRINCESS PATRICIA'S CANADIAN LIGHT INFANTRY

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this year, the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry celebrates its 100th anniversary.

I was honoured to attend the maple tree planting ceremony this morning at Rideau Hall to recognize this significant milestone.

Oral Questions

The Princess Pats, as they are affectionately known, have a long history of serving Canada. The regiment was formed here in Ontario in August 1914 and was renowned for holding the line at Passchendaele at great personal cost.

Following the First World War, the Patricias were formed into a permanent force regiment and are now based in western Canada at Shilo, Manitoba, and Edmonton, Alberta.

Princess Pats' brave men and women have served with distinction in both world wars, the Korean War, and Afghanistan and were a critical part of NATO's Canadian Brigade Group in Europe. They have made Canadians proud serving as UN peacekeepers throughout the world.

It is truly an honour to mark this very special occasion. Please join me as we congratulate the Princess Pats.

* * *

[Translation]

END OF SUMMER RECESS

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our political lieutenant, the member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, spent over two solid weeks travelling the length and breadth of our beautiful province for his End of Summer Tour, and I would like to highlight this excellent initiative.

The tour began in his home riding of Roberval and continued all across Quebec: La Pocatière, Rivière-du-Loup, La Malbaie, Victoriaville, Drummondville, Trois-Rivières, Lévis, Quebec City, Montreal and plenty more.

In the course of his 4,000-kilometre journey, numerous MPs and ministers joined him. They met and talked with thousands of people, and one thing became clear: Quebeckers' values have much more in common with Conservative values than the opposition parties would have us believe.

The Liberal leader has made legalizing pot his priority, but we are focusing on what really matters to people: the economy and jobs.

Our Quebec lieutenant's tour is proof that we are more present in Quebec now than ever before.

* * *

[English]

U.S. STEEL CANADA

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today families in Hamilton and Nanticoke are reeling from the ominous news that U. S. Steel Canada has filed for bankruptcy protection. Nearly 15,000 workers and retirees are facing potentially devastating losses of their jobs and pensions.

Today *The Hamilton Spectator* said, in part:

The federal government has a role to play here....The [Conservative] government approved the sale of Stelco based on job and investment guarantees. It went after U. S. Steel when those conditions weren't met, but then backed off and agreed to an out-of-court settlement. It cannot now walk away....

USW Local 1005 president Rolf Gerstenberger has called the bankruptcy protection a form of "legalized theft".

Members should make no mistake. All Hamiltonians are united in support of our friends, family, and neighbours. In our collective voice, we are calling for the government to finally do the right thing—to stand up and protect Hamilton's jobs and pensions.

* * *

TERRORISM

Ms. Roxanne James (Scarborough Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the dark and dangerous world in which we find ourselves, the first duty of any government is to keep law-abiding Canadians safe from those who wish to do us harm. That is exactly what our Conservative government is doing. We passed the Combating Terrorism Act to crack down on radicals who travel overseas to commit horrific acts of terrorism. We also passed the Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act to allow us to strip citizenship from anyone who is caught fighting against the Canadian Armed Forces.

Members should contrast this with the leader of the Liberal Party, who opposes taking away passports from terrorists, claiming that it is an affront to Canadian values. This is after he tried to make excuses for the terrorists who bombed the Boston Marathon.

The member for Kingston and the Islands sees beauty and light inside the Islamic state terrorists who brutally murdered journalists.

On the issue of national security, it is clear that the Liberal Party is in way over its head.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

AIR TRANSPORTATION

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, despite the consensus in the region, the Mirabel terminal will be demolished. The Liberals killed the airport in 2004, and now the Conservatives want to put the last nail in the coffin.

The mayor of Mirabel, Jean Bouchard, was clear and said that this was complete arrogance on the part of ADM. He said, "The minister is nowhere to be found on this issue and never wanted to meet with us. Even though the ADM administers the airport, the Government of Canada owns it."

The minister himself is a former mayor. Is meeting with mayors now below him? Is it because he is now a big shot?

• (1420)

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I guess I would like to remind the hon. Leader of the Opposition that the Minister of Transport is actually a she, not a he—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Oral Questions

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, the Mirabel Airport is the property of Transport Canada. However, it is under a lease with the Aéroports de Montréal, as I have mentioned before.

They have taken the decision, after 10 years of attempting to find somebody to lease this facility, to do something with it. They have taken this decision, and we support it.

* * *

[Translation]

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs is a “he,” and he is hiding behind her.

[English]

For years Conservatives have rejected calls for a public inquiry on murdered and missing aboriginal women in Canada. The Prime Minister ignores the underlying causes of this tragedy. Now Conservatives are brushing aside recommendations on how to resolve this crisis from the AFN.

Ghislain Picard, the new head, has said that the Conservatives are ignoring all of their recommendations, and their action plan is meaningless.

When will Conservatives start listening to indigenous women on the subject of indigenous women?

Hon. K. Kellie Leitch (Minister of Labour and Minister of Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a very serious issue, and families and victims want action.

Let me tell the House, in the words of an indigenous woman, Bernadette Smith, whose sister, Claudette Osborne, went missing in July 2008, and I quote:

This Action Plan is something that our families have been waiting for. I would like to thank... the Government for their commitment to addressing this issue... We've had numerous studies on this issue and the time for action is now. We can't stand idly by and talk about this without taking significant action. This Action Plan will have a direct impact on families and it will help keep our women and girls safe.

* * *

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we need a full inquiry into murdered and missing indigenous women. Within 100 days, an NDP government will call one.

We are just a year removed from the Lac-Mégantic tragedy. Today is the anniversary of a deadly bus-train collision here in Ottawa. On Tuesday, Slave Lake in Alberta had its sixth train derailment in five months—six train derailments in five months in one town. How many more before someone is killed?

Will Conservatives finally acknowledge that these are not isolated incidents? Self-regulation does not work.

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we do remember, very much, today what happened in the unfortunate accident between and OC Transpo bus and a VIA Rail train. People

lost their lives, and families were forever shaken. Of course, we do remember that.

With respect to derailments in this country, our government has been working since 2006 on rail safety. We have invested hundreds of millions of dollars, and indeed, this year, specifically, we have made incredible strides forward in terms of regulation, working with industry and communities. We will continue to do exactly that.

* * *

STEEL INDUSTRY

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, U.S. Steel Canada has filed for bankruptcy protection. It is a major blow to families in Hamilton and Nanticoke. It is a cold reminder of the failure of the Conservatives to stand up for workers during foreign takeovers.

In failing to hold U.S. Steel to production and employment commitments, the Conservatives turned their backs on thousands of workers in Hamilton and Nanticoke.

Will the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, who is also the MP for Haldimand—Norfolk, finally stand up for steelworkers and join us in the fight to protect their jobs?

Hon. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government's thoughts are with the workers and their families during this restructuring process. While this process is ongoing, U.S. Steel has indicated that they will continue to operate, pay employees, service customers, and make pension contributions.

The Government of Canada will continue to monitor the situation closely, but it is too early to comment on what the outcome of the Companies' Creditors Arrangement Act process will be.

● (1425)

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that answer is cold comfort to steelworkers and their families.

It gets even worse. Not only have the Conservatives failed to protect these jobs, they are also failing to protect pensions. Fifteen thousand former and current employees are seeing their pensions put at risk. Pensions are deferred wages that people are counting on for their retirements.

The one thing the government could do to help these pensioners today is put them at the head of the line when it comes to paying out creditors. Will the Minister of Finance finally agree to change Canada's bankruptcy laws to protect retirees when companies fail?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member knows, again, our hearts go out to those members. Certainly, people who built this country depend on a pension plan for a dignified retirement here in Canada. That is why our government has moved forward on many different roads. We have included new measures, like tax-free savings accounts. We have gone through with pooled registered pension plans.

The government understands that a dignified retirement for Canadian retirees is something we are going to work for.

*Oral Questions***EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the latest report from Statistics Canada revealed the loss of 112,000 private sector jobs. Through the past 12 months, only 15,000 full-time jobs have been generated in the whole country in a whole year. There are 230,000 more unemployed Canadians than before the recession. Therefore, if the government has \$550 million to invest, why not provide an exemption from employment insurance payroll taxes for every Canadian employer who creates a net new job?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Liberal Party and the Liberal leader roll out their EI on the go. We know that they understand very little about small business and business here in the country.

Let me quote someone who does understand, who does get it. That is Dan Kelly, the president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. He said, in regard to our small business job credit, "It is a big, big deal for small business."

It is good news for people looking for jobs. It is good news for those in companies where perhaps the business owner has had a more limited time in increasing their wages to—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Wascana.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the design of the government's EI credit is totally unconnected to more employment. It puts a cap on growth and actually creates a perverse incentive to fire people.

In previous budget submissions, the Canadian Federation of Independent Business proposed exactly what the member for Papineau proposed this week. I quote the CFIB, "an EI holiday on increased payroll".

For the money the government has already earmarked, this could help generate 175,000 net new jobs, so why not?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, now the Liberal Party comes with new ideas about EI. We know what the Liberals did when they were in power. They raided the EI premium account. They delved into \$60 billion of EI premiums and spent it for their own purposes.

Our business job credit will lower EI payroll taxes by 15%. It will save small businesses over \$550 million. The same Canadian Federation of Independent Business that he quoted said that this credit will create 25,000 person-years of—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I will ask members to come to order.

The hon. member for Wascana has one more question.

* * *

TAXATION

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, another flawed idea is the government's proposed income splitting scheme. From the C.D. Howe Institute to the late Jim Flaherty, that scheme has been panned as too expensive and unfair to 85% of Canadians. Mr. Flaherty called it an election bauble. Federally, it will cost nearly \$3 billion, but the Mowat Centre says it will also cost the provinces another \$1.7 billion, taken from health care and education.

Will the government listen to Mr. Flaherty and say no to this costly and unfair bauble?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Prime Minister has said that income splitting was a good policy for Canadian seniors and it will be a good policy for Canadian families.

The Liberal leader should explain why he has pledged to reverse income splitting. Seniors across Canada are saving thousands of dollars each year, thanks to pension income splitting. This type of Liberal Party arrogance toward middle-class families and toward our seniors is becoming all too familiar.

* * *

• (1430)

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, listening to the Liberals talk about EI reform would be like taking investment advice from Bernie Madoff. There is a bit of a trust issue from Canadians. Liberals and Conservatives seem to be in some kind of—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. I would like hon. members to allow the member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley to finish putting his question. The hon. member for Skeena—Bulkley Valley.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, Liberals and Conservatives seem to be in some kind of desperate bidding war to see who can do the most damage to our employment insurance program. The two old parties are in some kind of race to the bottom to see who can take more money from employees and give it to their employers. I guess ripping off the EI fund for \$57 billion was not enough for these guys and they rigged the system so even less than one-third of Canadians can gain access to it.

Will the minister at least agree with one principle? That the money in the employment insurance program belongs to the workers and employers who paid into it.

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, what I will agree with is that lowering EI payroll taxes, like we have done by 15%, will save small businesses over \$550 million at a time where they understand the importance of decreasing payroll taxes. The Canadian Federation of Independent Business says that the credit will create 25,000 person-years of employment. While we are lowering payroll taxes to 90% of businesses, they want us to raise those taxes.

*Oral Questions***TAXATION**

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there goes that Hudak math again, and we know how it worked out for them.

I guess it is not enough for Conservatives to be ripping off workers; they also want to give a tax break to the wealthiest Canadians. There is more evidence out today that not only will the Conservatives' income splitting scheme cost the federal treasury almost \$3 billion, but it is also going to blow a \$2-billion hole in provincial coffers. Mr. Flaherty cast it out. Even the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, that left-wing socialist think tank, thinks this is a bad tax policy.

Will the Conservatives come down off their tax high horse, agree that this policy is unfair, and renege on that bad promise?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister quoted right here in the House that income splitting for seniors was good policy for Canadians, and it will be good policy for Canadian families. Once the budget is balanced, our government is committed to greater tax savings for all Canadians. As a result of our low-tax plan, the average family of four has over \$3,400 more in its pocket this year, 2014.

Shamefully, for all the job-creation measures, the NDP votes against every measure that we bring forward.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, either the minister is purposely creating confusion, or else he himself is confused about this topic.

A third study, from the Mowat Centre, confirms that the provinces will have to bear the costs of and go along with the Conservative government and its ideological income splitting plan. The total bill for the provinces is \$1.7 billion as of the first year. The federal government is using the EI fund surplus to balance its budget. The provinces, for the most part, are struggling with their budgets.

Is this the government's version of co-operative federalism?

[*English*]

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, under this government, over one million low-income Canadians, including 380,000 seniors, have been removed completely from the tax rolls of Canada. We have reduced the overall tax burden to its lowest in 50 years. Unlike the high-tax-and-spend Liberals and New Democrats, our Conservative government believes in lowering taxes and leaving more money where it belongs, in the pockets of hard-working Canadians, families and also job-creating businesses.

* * *

PRIVACY

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' campaign to silence anyone who disagrees with them has now reached a new low. Not only has the government ordered audits of charities, including environmental and anti-poverty groups, in an attempt to silence potential critics, but now we have also learned that the Government Operations Centre spied on nearly 800 public meetings and demonstrations across

Canada. The events included a peaceful vigil for missing and murdered aboriginal women and a public university lecture.

How much is the current government spending on surveillance of Canadians who are only exercising their democratic rights?

• (1435)

Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course we respect the right of all Canadians to protest peacefully. However, Canadians expect local law enforcement to ensure that the law is always respected. I want to assure Canadians that the Government Operations Centre monitors any event that may be a risk to public safety.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in the past two years alone, the Government Operations Centre has spied on a discussion at Concordia University on colonialism in Quebec, a march in Montreal for the 1,200 missing and murdered aboriginal women and, worse, a protest by lobster fishermen in New Brunswick. Come on.

Why does the minister insist on wasting time and money monitoring Canadians' actions, instead of looking after public safety in our communities?

[*English*]

Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, we respect the right of all Canadians to protest peacefully. With respect to the order paper question, the government's response was clear. The Government Operations Centre does not conduct surveillance.

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[*Translation*]

CHAMPLAIN BRIDGE

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Parliamentary Budget Officer's report on the Champlain Bridge is very clear: the toll that the Conservatives are trying to impose, with the complicit silence of the Liberals, will cause major traffic problems in the greater Montreal area. Workers and low-income families will be the hardest hit.

Will the Conservatives stop trying to convince us that the economy is their priority when they are preparing to take money directly out of the pockets of south shore families with the new transportation tax for workers?

Oral Questions

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the tendering process is under way.

Right now, three consortiums are working on proposals that they will submit to us this spring. The process for building a new bridge over the St. Lawrence is on track. As we announced at the outset, there have been no surprises in the process to date. We intend to have the bridge built on time and even three years earlier than we originally announced.

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the Board of Trade of Metropolitan Montreal indicated, the issue of funding for the bridge must go beyond the simplistic application of the user-pay principle.

I repeat: the Minister of Infrastructure's simplistic approach is not viable. We are talking about massive traffic jams, billions of dollars in lost productivity, and low-income families who will be stuck with the bill.

Will the minister go back to the drawing board and change his plans to impose a tax on workers that will cripple Montreal's entire economy?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the construction of the new bridge will create 30,000 new jobs. That is big for Montreal's economy. Not building a new bridge would have been the worst thing that could have happened to Montreal. We are going to build a bridge that will improve traffic flow and make people proud.

* * *

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister is not very good at skating. In fact, all the Conservative players are dragging their skates. They even lost a veteran, who would rather play on the American team. The only plan the head coach came up with to get his team going again was to pay for television ads during the playoffs.

Unfortunately, the government is refusing to tell us how much of the taxpayers' money has been spent on these ads.

As they opt for secrecy over and over again and waste public funds, do the Conservatives realize that Canadians will want to replace the entire team in 2015?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government is responsible for informing Canadians about the programs and services available to them. Advertising is of course an essential means of informing Canadians about important issues, such as stimulus measures, tax credits and public health issues.

[English]

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is why they were talking about advertising programs that did not exist.

Today we learn that Conservatives spent \$2.7 million on political staff for their own satellite offices. I would like to congratulate the member and the whole team for doing what they said they would never do. How can he justify cutting support for seasonal workers, cutting mail delivery for senior citizens, cutting support for Canada's veterans, while spending millions of dollars on partisan advertising and operatives in satellite offices?

• (1440)

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unlike the previous government, we believe that all Canadians should have reasonable access to government ministers' offices. That is why in 2010 we expanded and launched offices in the Northwest Territories and in three offices in the north. That is because, unlike the opposition, we believe that all Canadians in all regions should have access to government services right across this great country. I should add that since 2009, PMO and ministers' office salaries have dropped more than \$10 million a year.

* * *

[Translation]

CHAMPLAIN BRIDGE

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the CBC revealed the existence of a new study commissioned by Transport Canada on the impact of the Champlain Bridge toll.

This study, kept secret by the Conservative government, shows that traffic volume would increase tremendously on the other south shore bridges.

How long has the government been hiding this study paid for by Canadians? Can the government release all the studies on the replacement of the Champlain Bridge?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we have always said, the studies carried out on the construction of the new bridge over the St. Lawrence will be made public once we have awarded the contract and the bidding process has ended.

Similarly, in the case of Highway 15 and Highway 30, when my colleague was in the Quebec government, some developments, reports, and plans were released subsequently.

We have absolutely nothing to hide, but we will not do anything that will cause an increase in construction costs.

Oral Questions

[English]

EMPLOYMENT

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday Stelco moved into bankruptcy protection, threatening more than thousands of families in the Hamilton area.

Despite the Conservatives' wasted billion-dollar economic aid campaign, the ongoing loss of good manufacturing jobs means a trickle-down hit for working families and the economies surrounding them. The government has dumped hundreds of millions of dollars onto boardroom tables throughout Canada and has justified the giveaway by promising it has protected jobs.

My question is for the Prime Minister. Exactly what is the job creation plan?

Hon. Mike Lake (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the job creation plan is going to be to continue the same job creation plan that we have had since 2009, where we have created one million net new jobs in our country. Nearly 90% of them are full-time and over 80% are in the private sector.

We hope that, maybe, starting today, the Liberals will support some of that.

* * *

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, will the Conservatives stop attacking francophone communities?

Funds allocated to language learning have not increased since 2005, despite inflation; \$120 million has been diverted from the roadmap to English language learning in anglophone provinces, which is of no help to francophones; and delays in program delivery are adding up. To top it off, the Minister of Immigration has eliminated a program that encouraged francophone immigration outside of Quebec.

What is he thinking?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is way off base.

We have made important reforms to the temporary foreign worker program to ensure that Canadians have priority access to all available jobs.

The exemption the hon. member spoke of applied only to certain temporary foreign workers. We are aiming for several thousands of francophone immigrants, and we are making great strides.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with great surprise that we learned today that the Conservatives have quietly lifted sanctions on two Russian banks. In addition, they continue to shield three Russian tycoons who have close ties to

President Putin and who also have business interests in Canada. This is the opposite of targeted sanctions.

Therefore, the obvious question is this. Why are they leaving these people and these banks off of the sanctions list?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, following receipt of new information and further investigation and analysis, these entities are being removed from the list. They were deemed to be sufficiently divorced from Russian events against Ukraine.

Let us look at Canada, the United States, and the E.U. In the United States, President Obama has 107 sanctions. The E.U. has 106 sanctions. How many does Canada have? It has the largest number in the world, with 189.

That is real leadership. That is why the President of Ukraine is so thrilled with this government.

● (1445)

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is not a question of numbers. It is a question of selectivity and comprehensibility.

Two Russian banks were very quietly removed from the Canadian sanctions list on Tuesday. We know that Russian economic tycoons who are close to Putin, are on the American lists, and are financially involved in Canadian companies, are not affected by these sanctions, which are strangely selective, to be quite honest.

The Prime Minister promised that financial interests would not influence foreign affairs.

Why did he break that promise?

[English]

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact, earlier this week we added one institution, more commercial entities and more individuals. That is why Canada is not a world leader, it is the world leader in terms of sanctioning the Putin government and Moscow.

We will continue to stand up for the territorial integrity of Ukraine. We will continue to stand up for its sovereignty. We will continue to stand up for freedom. That is why just yesterday in this place the President of Ukraine said that Canada was Ukraine's strongest friend and best ally.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians do not believe the Minister of National Defence's vague promises anymore. They need a minister who stands up and takes responsibility for the Conservatives' failure when it comes to the mental health of our soldiers.

With the number of soldiers who have committed suicide now higher than the number of soldiers killed in combat in Afghanistan, how does the Minister of National Defence explain that 10% of positions for mental health staff in his department remain vacant?

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what the hon. member does not mention is that we have a record number of mental health professionals, over 400. In addition, we have made an unprecedented investment in the area of mental health. We work with these individuals. We are committed to them. We will continue to do our very best despite never getting support from the NDP on this issue.

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what does it really mean to be a priority for the Conservative government?

Nine months ago after the minister stood and solemnly vowed to fix the problem, DND still has not met the benchmark of 454 mental health staff, with 40 empty positions across the country and wait times that are increasing. We are now aware that the government knew full well that suicides in the Canadian Forces eclipsed direct combat deaths in the past decade.

Where is the urgency? What is it going to take for the minister to get this essential staff hired?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we respect the urgency. From day one this government started to make this and all issues related to our military men and women a priority. I have indicated already that we have put unprecedented investments into this area. We have over 400 full-time mental health professionals.

When is that party going to get on board and start supporting some of these measures? This is what we need for our men and women in uniform, and we are committed to that.

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on May 29, the Fair Rail for Grain Farmers Act received royal assent. The regulatory measures that followed are the latest milestones in a series of actions our government has taken to get grain moving and improve the performance of the entire rail supply chain.

Contrary to CN Rail's claims, there is still grain to move on the prairies. Farmers have told me that their grain is still not being moved and that CN is refusing to move it. CN continues to claim there is no backlog. This is a grain backlog denial of the highest sort.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture tell the House what the government is doing to ensure rail companies like CN follow the rules?

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government stands with western Canada's hard-working grain farmers and that is why the first monetary penalty under the Fair Rail for Grain Farmers Act will be imposed on CN Railway for failing to move a minimum amount of grain each week. This first monetary penalty is proof that we meant what we said when we passed the Fair Rail for Grain Farmers Act. Our government fully defends farmers and shippers.

We remain hopeful that CN and all members of the rail supply chain will choose to be part of the solution.

● (1450)

*[Translation]***EMPLOYMENT**

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, despite the Minister of Employment and Social Development's Band-Aid solutions, problems with the temporary foreign worker program persist. We were told that employers who hired temporary foreign workers would not be allowed to lay off Canadian employees. That is not true. Three months later, the minister is continuing to provide some employers with cheap labour.

Will the minister get the program back on the right track once and for all?

[English]

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that we have made substantive changes to the temporary foreign worker program because we believe Canadians should always have first crack at those jobs.

That member could ask the business community how these changes have affected it and the fact that it has had to revamp how it will fill those positions. Instead, the opposition continues to ask us for more temporary foreign workers.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, how can the minister say that he fixed the temporary foreign worker program when some types of temporary foreign workers are still being fast-tracked, labour market opinions are still based on bogus statistics and nothing is being done to improve conditions for temporary foreign workers?

Despite the minister's Band-Aid solutions, Canadian workers are still being laid off in favour of temporary foreign workers. When will this stop?

[English]

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the member has any information regarding specific employers that have laid off Canadians to replace them with temporary foreign workers, we would like that to be reported.

Here are some of the changes we have made. On top of a major fee increase from \$250 to \$1,000 per application, we have ensured that employers, for example, with 10 or more employees applying for a new LMIA are subject to a cap of 10% on the proportion of their workforce.

There are a number of changes that we have made. The New Democrats do not support the changes. They are all over the map when it comes to temporary foreign workers. We will not trust them on this one.

Oral Questions

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are not going to fall for the minister's spin.

The minister is pretending to fix the temporary foreign worker program because applications for labour market opinions have gone down. However, the majority of foreign workers in Canada never needed an LMO, and all the minister did for that side of the program was change the name. The minister did nothing to protect foreign workers from abuse or to protect Canadian workers from layoffs.

Why will the minister not actually fix this program?

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that the majority of temporary foreign workers did require an LMO. That has been replaced by the more rigorous LMIA.

I am not sure if the New Democrats are suggesting that we make major changes to the agricultural stream, which is working very well. Instead, we made rigorous changes to the part of the temporary foreign worker program whereby Canadians were not getting jobs or Canadians were being fired to be replaced with temporary foreign workers.

We made those changes June 20, we are implementing them, and we are looking forward to good results.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadian skilled workers are fed up with the government's failure to defend and protect jobs. In June, the NDP wrote to the minister seeking action on layoffs of Canadian ironworkers at oil sands operations and their replacement by temporary foreign workers. There has been no reply.

Over the past four months yet more violations have been exposed and more Canadian workers denied jobs. The boilermakers have now joined force with the ironworkers in a call for action on layoffs and worker safety.

When can they finally expect action from the minister?

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fact is that investigations are ongoing and we will ensure that anyone who has abused the temporary foreign worker program is held to the fullest extent of the law and accountability.

The irony is the majority of letters and contacts we get from the opposition on temporary foreign workers ask for more temporary foreign workers in their ridings.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this week armed forces members and all Canadians are saddened by the tragedy of yet another military suicide, and our thoughts are with the family.

As well, we are reminded of the failure of the defence minister to do what is needed and what he promised to do, which was to make more mental health support available, rather than to make more excuses, as he is doing today. Penny-pinching and budget cuts are the legacy of that minister. Nine months after promising to make this a priority, 40 mental health positions remain empty.

How can the minister delay this hiring when so many are in need?

• (1455)

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we continue to invest in this area, and that is exactly what we have been doing. We have made unprecedented investments in this area. We have now over 400 full-time mental health professionals. We work with the members of our armed forces to ensure they get the assistance they need.

I will make a promise to the House that we will never go back to the way things were under the Liberals. I promise.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Tuesday, the minister denied veterans were being abandoned, encouraging them to seek any professional help they needed, but the reality shows those are empty words.

I have heard from a veteran in Charlottetown who did step forward, was told he had PTSD, was told he would get help, was told by the government it would pay until his benefits started so help would be immediate, and then it refused to pay. This is why our veterans are driven to despair.

How can the government claim leadership on a mental health issue if it will not even keep its word?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me reiterate the fact that no veteran in need of help, or his or her family, is turned away. If we know the issues and the member knows the issue, I would be pleased to look into that specific item.

We are looking after our veterans from coast to coast to coast, and their families. We will continue doing that. We will not use those tragic events and those circumstances to gain political points on the backs of veterans.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with the Ebola virus spreading beyond Africa and the EV-D68 virus hitting Canada, we cannot help but note that since 2011, the budget of the Public Health Agency of Canada has been reduced by \$153 million. Can the minister assure us that the 22% cut to her budget will not jeopardize Canadians' health?

[English]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can reassure the public that the Public Health Agency remains in contact with partners to better understand these recent cases.

Specifically in relation to EV-D68, we are monitoring these cases closely. The member and the public should know that the agency is in close contact with provinces and territories and with U.S. public health officials, and we stand ready to support the provinces and territories with any lab support or guidance that they may need.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister is not answering the question. A 22% budget cut for the Public Health Agency and 500 employees laid off across the country is hardly good preparation for emergent health issues now before us.

The fact is that Canadians count on PHAC to protect them from serious pandemics. With EV-D68 now confirmed in Canada and concerns about Ebola in Africa, Canadians have the right to question the priorities of this minister.

Why is the minister decreasing the agency's capacity to deal with public health emergencies?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is a reason that Dr. Margaret Chan, the head of the World Health Organization, calls Canada as one of the first countries when there is a public health outbreak around the world. It is because Canada's Public Health Agency has a world-leading record on dealing with pandemics, whether they are here at home, like H1N1, or abroad, like Ebola. Canada is at the forefront of working with the international community to deal with the Ebola issue.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in recent weeks Canadians have witnessed atrocities committed by the terrorist organization known as the Islamic State.

Unspeakable acts have been committed in the name of establishing a caliphate, not the least of which was the barbaric execution of three western journalists.

While this has happened, the Liberal leader has mused that taking passports away from homegrown radicals as one method of cracking down on potential terrorist threats is an affront to Canadian values.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness update this House on what our Conservative government is doing to keep Canadians safe from terrorist fighters?

Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr.

Speaker, our Conservative government has made it a criminal offence to go overseas to engage in terrorism, and we have taken steps to strip the citizenship of those convicted of terrorist offences.

Members can contrast that with the leader of the Liberal Party, who said with regard to the Boston bombing that it was caused by someone being excluded or by exclusion and who goes shopping for votes at a fundamentalist Mosque in Montreal.

While the Liberal member for Kingston and the Islands says Liberals see light and beauty inside every person, specifically citing a terrorist who beheaded three journalists, our Conservative government will make—

● (1500)

The Speaker: The hon. member for Markham—Unionville.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in a move that is symptomatic of the Conservatives' callous disregard of family reunification, they have cut off the entry of spouses into Canada for the rest of the year because they have hit their quota.

Never mind that the spouses have already been waiting an average of 19 months, twice as much as before. Never mind that the government allowed the quota to be exceeded back in 2006-2007.

Why will the minister not simply do the right thing and let these spouses into Canada?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member's statement is once again completely false. His scaremongering is well known in this place and unfortunately across Canada.

We as a government are proud of our record of the highest sustained levels of immigration in Canadian history, including the strongest family reunification numbers in Canadian history. It never happened under the Liberals.

In only three years, over 70,000 parents and grandparents will have been processed to come to this country. That stands in stark contrast to the backlogs, the dysfunctionality, and the lack—

The Speaker: The hon. member for LaSalle—Émard.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Sunday, more than 200 people attended a rally in support of the Fuh-Cham family in LaSalle. The family is facing deportation. Another rally was held yesterday, in Montreal. The family has three children. If they are deported to Cameroon on October 9, they will face great danger, including the circumcision of their two daughters. Will the minister intervene and allow this family to stay in Canada and have their refugee claim reviewed?

Business of Supply

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every asylum seeker benefits from the generosity of our system. There are many avenues of appeal.

However, when those appeals are exhausted, we expect the individuals in question to leave the country.

* * *

[English]

SMALL BUSINESS

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, over the summer I listened to many small business owners in my riding of Don Valley West, and a common concern was the amount of red tape that businesses face on a yearly basis. Administrative red tape impacts the ability of small businesses to create jobs, to innovate, and to grow the economy.

Earlier this week I was pleased to see debate on Bill C-21, the red tape reduction act, take place in the House, and I hope all members will support small business across this country.

Could the minister update the House on what our government is doing to reduce red tape for small business?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as you know, there is actually a bill before this House to legislate the one-for-one rule, which means that any regulatory agency in the Government of Canada that puts in a new regulation that affects small business has to take at least one of a similar magnitude out. We have already had this rule in place informally, and it has meant savings for small businesses of over \$22 million and a reduction of over 290,000 hours in time spent filling out paperwork.

On this side of the House, we are in favour of small business and we support small business. On the other side of the House, they do not.

* * *

PRIVACY

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians made it clear and the Supreme Court in June made it clear that there should be no more warrantless requests for telecom customers' personal data, as it constitutes a privacy breach, yet months after the Supreme Court ruling, law enforcement agencies are still making these requests. They are asking big telecom companies for addresses, names, and phone numbers, all without warrants.

How long will Canadians have to wait for the government to review the decision and finally end this illegal practice?

Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to first just say that the majority of the requests were for location information on 911 emergency calls.

That said, of course our government takes the privacy of law-abiding Canadians very seriously, and we expect all law enforcement agencies to comply with Canadian law regarding receiving this type of information.

[Translation]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, the government is already making election promises with its surplus. That is because it is creating a fiscal imbalance, which was condemned just yesterday in a motion by the Quebec National Assembly. According to the Conference Board of Canada, in 20 years the federal surplus will be \$110 billion and the provincial deficits will be \$172 billion.

Does the Minister of Finance intend to respond to his Quebec counterpart by restoring health transfers, without which Quebec will lose \$7 billion in seven years, and the infrastructure transfers that the municipalities so desperately need?

● (1505)

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, federal transfers to the provinces have reached record levels since we formed the government. Equalization continues to significantly support the entire country, including, of course, the province of Quebec. We will continue to work with the province.

We have worked hard to reduce federal government spending, and that work has been recognized everywhere. We will continue to be excellent partners for the province of Quebec.

* * *

[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: That concludes question period for today.

I would like to draw the attention of hon. members to the presence in the gallery of His Excellency Kassa Tekeleberhan Gebrehiwot, Speaker of the House of the Federation of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—FEDERAL MINIMUM WAGE

The House resumed from September 16 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: Pursuant to an order made on Tuesday, September 16, 2014, the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion moved by the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie relating to the business of supply.

Business of Supply

Call in the members.

• (1515)

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

(Division No. 225)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Ashton	Atamanenko
Aubin	Ayala
Bélangier	Bellavance
Bennett	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette
Boivin	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Brisson	Brosseau
Caron	Casey
Cash	Chan
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Christopherson	Cleary
Côté	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Dubourg
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseault
Easter	Foote
Fortin	Freeman
Fry	Gameau
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Gravelle	Groguhé
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (St. John's East)
Hsu	Hughes
Hyer	Jacob
Jones	Julian
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Larose
Latendresse	Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Masse	Mathysen
May	McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mourani
Mulcair	Murray
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Patry
Péclet	Perreault
Pilon	Quach
Rafferty	Rankin
Raynault	Regan
Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sellah
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
St-Denis	Stewart
Sullivan	Toone
Tremblay	Turmel
Valeriotte	Vaughan— 124

NAYS

Members

Adams	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander

Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Ambler
Ambrose	Anderson
Aspin	Baird
Barlow	Bateman
Benoit	Bergen
Bernier	Bezan
Block	Boughen
Braid	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Butt
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Carrie	Chisu
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Crockatt
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Falk
Fantino	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Goguen	Goldring
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hillyer
Hoback	Holder
James	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Leaf	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Maguire	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Menegakis	Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Nicholson
Obhrai	O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Payne
Poilievre	Preston
Raitt	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Saxton
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Strahl	Tilson
Toet	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Uppal	Valcourt
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Wong
Woodworth	Yelich
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Yurdiga	Zimmer— 138

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

I wish to inform the House that, because of the deferred recorded division, government orders will be extended by eight minutes.

I would hate to be accused of depriving my hon. colleagues of the first Thursday question after our summer recess, so I do apologize and I will now give the floor to the hon. opposition House leader.

*Government Orders***GOVERNMENT ORDERS***[Translation]***BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE**

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we always take the first week to get back into shape for the fall and winter.

It has been a big week for our Parliament. On Monday we had an important debate on the Ebola epidemic that is currently affecting West Africa and has claimed thousands of victims. We thank the NDP member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie for having requested that debate in the House.

On Tuesday we heard a memorable, very important speech from the Leader of the Opposition on the Canadian military mission in Iraq.

On Wednesday, as everyone knows, we had an important visit from the President of Ukraine, President Poroshenko.

That is what has happened this week. I would like to ask my colleague, the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, what the government has in store for us next week.

[English]

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me welcome you and everyone back to the House for the autumn sitting. I know it will be a hard-working, orderly, and productive sitting because there is much work that we have to do.

This afternoon, we will resume third reading debate on Bill C-3, the safeguarding Canada's seas and skies act. Tomorrow, we will have the final day of third reading debate on Bill C-8, the combating counterfeit products act.

[Translation]

Monday, at noon, we will start the report stage of Bill C-36, the Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act. In the afternoon, we will start the report stage of Bill C-13, the Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act.

Tuesday, as I announced at the start of the week, shall be the second allotted day. This will be an opportunity for the leader of the Liberal Party to put forward a proposal for some new initiative. This week we saw the New Democrats do that. As much as their idea was neither bold nor responsible, it was a motion which let us have a debate on the merits of an idea. I hope the hon. member for Papineau will be inspired to set aside his musings of the summer and present to us a concrete proposal for which he will come into this House to explain and defend in debate.

[English]

On Wednesday and Thursday, I will give priority to the consideration of any new government legislation that may be introduced between now and then.

*[English]***SAFEGUARDING CANADA'S SEAS AND SKIES ACT**

The House resumed from June 17 consideration of the motion that Bill C-3, An Act to enact the Aviation Industry Indemnity Act, to amend the Aeronautics Act, the Canada Marine Act, the Marine Liability Act and the Canada Shipping Act, 2001 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): When the House last took up this question, the hon. member for Winnipeg North had 14 minutes remaining in his time for comments on the question.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not usually at a loss for words. I understand that I have 14 minutes left to speak. I am just not too sure about the bill you actually called. I have some notes on my desk, so could you just refer me to the specific bill?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The bill that was announced under orders of the day is Bill C-3, safeguarding Canada's seas and skies act. We are at third reading, resuming debate.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, one of the issues is that, when we adjourn debates, quite often what ends up happening is that we are in a situation where we will have the start of second reading on a particular bill only to find out that we might not actually have the continuation of that debate for weeks or months.

This is one of the problems in terms of the whole issue. I have talked about this in the past. I will just talk a little about the process. We do need to have more co-operation amongst parties inside the chamber. That would allow for a more even flow of the legislative agenda.

Then if we had a priority bill, it would be brought back within a few days, as opposed to having to wait for months. I think that is what has happened with this particular bill. The bill was brought in, and I do not have the actual date in front of me but if I were to speculate, my best guesstimate would be that it was likely several months ago when it was before the House. Then we find ourselves in the situation we are in today.

In my opening comments, if I were to give a little reflection, members would find that the principle of a bill is something in which it is always good to get more of the details. One of the advantages of the bill going to committee is the fact that we will do just that, going through the bill, listening to different stakeholders and the input they might have to provide. On any piece of legislation that would be very advantageous.

If I could provide a bit more specific information, what we are seeing in this bill is a piecemeal approach, or what we might even describe as an incoherent approach to the transportation safety policy in Canada.

Government Orders

When I hear about transportation safety in Canada, there is an endless number of examples and thoughts that come to mind. All I have to do is just talk about train transportation and the huge need and desire that Canadians have to deal with transportation safety, in particular with our railways.

Small things are trickling out in dribs and drabs from the government, without any comprehensive approach to transportation safety in the country to deal with many important issues. Even though I made reference to train transportation, it is important that we recognize, as this bill does, marine transportation and passenger safety, which goes beyond that.

We can look at how much Canada as a country has become urbanized. It has many train hubs, and with respect to Winnipeg, it is the CN yards out in the Symington area or the Transcona area or in my own back yard with the CP Rail expansion that has been taking place.

More and more, the quantity of goods actually being transported from coast to coast using the rail lines—and the product that is in those trains and tankers—is going through major suburban and inner-city areas, all over our country.

It should be no surprise that Canadians are growing more and more concerned about the content of our trains as they go through municipalities. More specifically, what is the government actually doing to protect our communities? We are just hearing dribs and drabs.

● (1520)

We have a government that seems to want to react as opposed to being proactive in dealing with issues related to safety. I believe the government has a lacklustre attitude in terms of trying to provide strong and improved regulations, which would go a long way in making our communities safer.

There is an opportunity here to come up with a more coherent and comprehensive approach. To that extent, I would ask the government, particularly the minister responsible, to what degree they have consulted with the many different stakeholders.

Of course, we have the standard stakeholders within certain industries, whether it be the marine community or rail transportation. However, we should be taking into consideration the provinces, which have regulations within their provincial jurisdictions. We should be seeing what municipalities have to say. We will find throughout Canada that there are many progressive stakeholders who, if afforded the opportunity to provide direct input into the development of legislation, would be more than happy to do so. This is something I would suggest the government has not been very successful at. It is one of the reasons I believe there are so many deficiencies in the legislation.

It is critically important that when legislation passes the floor of the House of Commons and goes to committee that the government be open to listening to what is presented in committee and open to amendments. I know that has not been a highlight of the current government in terms of receiving amendments, particularly from opposition parties. Often we find that amendments brought forward by opposition parties would add strength and value to laws and regulations. I believe that is what Canadians want to see.

I believe that once we get this bill to committee, we will find ideas that will lead to potential amendments. Hopefully the government will listen and support where it can, even though the Conservatives' track record is not good. However, I am an optimistic person.

As I have suggested, we can do a lot better than this in terms of transparency, which Canadians are asking for and deserve. Even though the bill is mostly about technical amendments, the Liberal Party will be supporting the bill going to committee.

● (1525)

We have had some horrific accidents over the last number of years. I would suggest there are things government should have been doing to deal with some of the regulations that need to be changed.

I think of my backyard, where we have the CP tracks going through the heart of Winnipeg's north end. Common commodities such as wheat and oil and many other products are shipped.

We have seen serious devastation in communities where rail line accidents have occurred.

Bill C-3 is a bill that is mostly about technical amendments, and that is why, in principle, we will support it going through. It would have been a lot better if the government had taken a more holistic approach to improving safety on our rail lines, in our air spaces, and in our oceans.

The government of the day can choose the status quo and not come up with bold initiatives that would have an impact, but there is going to be a cost. What we have witnessed over the last number of years is a higher sense of public safety and protecting our communities, because every so often, when we hear about a rail line accident, there is a great deal of media attention.

I would suggest that we do not have to wait for accidents to occur. There is a way we can deal with it in a more proactive fashion.

Once the bill does go through the House at second reading and gets to committee, I look forward to the government having an open mind and allowing for some amendments to the legislation.

● (1530)

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Winnipeg North was quite mixed up at the beginning of his speech. He did not know which bill it was or what he should talk about. I think he is still mixed up, because we are debating third reading. It is not going to committee. That is over. We are at third reading, and the bill is not going to committee. I just wanted to help him a little bit.

At the same time, would he agree with me that the Liberals were in government for a long time, before the Conservatives, after the Conservatives, and before the Conservatives again? They were in government for many years. This is a problem that has existed for a long time, where government lets companies themselves be responsible for the security of people, then when an accident happens, it is too late.

Government Orders

The government has a responsibility to put the security mechanisms in place to ensure that people do not get hurt. That happened during the Liberal government, too. We should not be talking about this bill in 2014. It should have been there a long time ago. It is not the first incident that has happened in this country.

Would he agree with me that the Liberals failed to do that when they were in power?

• (1535)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments with regard to it now being at third reading versus second reading. It is very important that we pay attention as government bills are being called. Believe it or not, I do make some mistakes, and my apologies to members of the House if I might have given the impression that it was second reading. It is, in fact, third reading.

Having said that, I still believe that it is important to look at our current situation. There are many needs with regard to improving the system. When the Liberals were in government, did we have a perfect system? Likely not, but some significant improvements were made at that time. I suspect that in time, hopefully, the current government will be replaced, and we will once again have a more progressive government that will be able to look at the bigger picture in safety.

Although I was hoping there would have been some amendments, I do not think there would have been, and that would tell me that there were lost opportunities. I am sure I will hear in questions whether there were amendments passed.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this particular bill is mainly technical in scope, but the committee heard from a wide array of witnesses.

When we talk about rail safety, everybody is very much aware of some of the horrific accidents that took place, Lac-Mégantic being at the forefront of most people's recollections. We know that the Auditor General did an extensive study of all the events surrounding that accident.

I know that if we stand in the House during question period and ask the minister for particulars, the minister will stand and go on about how much money the government has spent specifically on rail safety. I would like to ask my colleague whether the minister is on solid ground when she says that. I guess that is the essence of my question.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport will say, for example, that the government has spent about \$100 million on safety since 2009, but what is important is that we put that in perspective. It sounds like a big number, except that it spent \$600 million on advertising over the same years, which is unbelievable. It spent \$550 million on outsourced legal fees. Therefore, we need to put things in the proper context.

• (1540)

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to help my colleagues from the Liberal Party to situate themselves a bit better. We are in third reading, but we are also in third reading of Bill C-3, which does not have much to do with railroads.

I will give the member the title, just so it is a little clearer in everybody's minds. It is an act to enact the Aviation Industry Indemnity Act, to amend the Aeronautics Act, the Canada Marine Act, the Marine Liability Act and the Canada Shipping Act, 2001 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts. Rail safety is an interesting point, and it is important that we debate it in the House, but perhaps we should be a little more on point as to what is being debated in the House at the moment.

Perhaps the Liberal Party is confused, because when we sent this bill to committee after second reading, it did not present any amendments. Maybe it just missed this bill entirely. I do not know. However, we are in third reading of a bill that has to do with marine safety, and that is what I would like to ask a question about.

Seeing as the Liberals did not produce any amendments during the committee stage, I will assume they are in agreement that a company should only be liable for \$230,000 in case of an oil spill.

I remember last summer that Conservative ministers suggested it should be as much as a billion dollars. That number has been substantially reduced. I assume that, because they have not produced any amendments, the Liberals are in agreement with the significant reduction in the liability for which a corporation would be responsible.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, when we talk about safety, there is an element of rail safety within the legislation. It is an important issue for many Canadians.

If the member wants to downplay railway safety, that is fine. He can choose to do that. We recognize that within our transportation industry, we need to take safety into consideration, not only marine but also railway and sky. I would be a bit disappointed if he does not recognize the value that we have put forward.

Regarding liability insurance, I have heard all sorts of extremes. I have heard members of his caucus talk about having \$38 billion to cover potential liabilities for offshore oil. Imagine if that NDP policy had been put in place. What impact would that have had on the development of oil out in the Atlantic Ocean?

The whole issue of insurance liability is very serious and it should not be taken lightly, because it does have a lot to do with our environment, our economy, jobs and so forth. The member tries to poke a bit of fun here and there, but at the end of the day, this is a serious issue and the legislation could have been improved. Even though I was not at that committee, the NDP did not get one amendment passed either.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if the member does want to talk about railway safety, let us talk about the Liberals' approval of remote control technology for trains in 2003, and how that led to one-man crews on the railway.

Would the member agree with the U.S. Federal Railroad Administration and say that one-man crews, when toxic materials are being transported, are actually a dangerous practice? Will he apologize for the approval of the former Liberal government for approving such dangerous measures on the railroads?

Government Orders

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Charlottetown brings up a good point, which is that the member is maybe stretching a bit here. I suspect the reason he might be stretching is because he is a little nervous. That is just a hypothesis on my part. I do not know for sure.

However, I would suggest, as I did about 15 minutes ago, that even when the Liberal Party was in government, it might not have been a perfect system, but there were efforts from previous Liberal administrations to take a more holistic approach at delivering a safer environment for all rail, air and marine transportation. The Liberal Party has taken this very seriously in the past and will continue to do so into the future.

• (1545)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to give my speech and my opinion on the bill before us. For the benefit of those present today, I will repeat that this is the third reading of Bill C-3, An Act to enact the Aviation Industry Indemnity Act, to amend the Aeronautics Act, the Canada Marine Act, the Marine Liability Act and the Canada Shipping Act, 2001 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

This bill will amend a great many laws on marine safety, mainly with respect to the transportation of dangerous and toxic products, especially petroleum products.

A number of witnesses told us what they thought about the proposed amendments. The NDP proposed amendments to the bill that the government did not accept. That is very unfortunate because the current bill is a step in the right direction, but a far cry from what it should be.

To add context I would like to quote Canada's Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development. He has repeatedly given us benchmarks so that we have an accurate picture of the state of marine safety with respect to the transport of hydrocarbon products. This is what he had to say in 2010:

The Canadian Coast Guard, the lead federal agency for responding to ship-source oil spills, has not conducted an assessment of its ship-source oil spill response capacity since 2000. While concerns have been raised regarding the state of the Coast Guard's oil spill response equipment, given the lack of recent capacity analyses and the lack of up-to-date knowledge on risks, the Coast Guard does not know if its ship-source oil spill response capacity is appropriate to address those risks.

He continues:

In the meantime, Canada lacks a formal framework for responding to chemical spills, including clear roles and responsibilities.

I would like to remind members that he said that in 2010. It seems that the message was not heard. In 2012, the commissioner again pointed out the following in his annual report:

The potential impacts of an offshore oil spill in Atlantic Canada, such as seen in the Gulf of Mexico in 2010, could be widespread and devastating to the environment, industry, and the livelihoods of many Canadians. As a result, it is essential that the offshore petroleum boards manage the risks and impacts associated with the oil and gas activities they regulate.

As I said, that was in 2012. The message still had not gotten through, so the commissioner brought up the problems yet again in his 2013 report, which stated:

The federal government has an important leadership role to play in protecting species and spaces and implementing a sustainable development agenda. Leadership

means first identifying where the federal government can add the most value, finding the most cost-effective way to do so, investing what it takes to add that value, and finally, following through on commitments. Fulfilling current promises is critical, because commitments are only the first steps toward the research, protection, and recovery needed. Building on progress and successes such as the Habitat Stewardship Program and the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, for example, is also vital.

In 2013, the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development once again reported that we did not have the equipment and were not ready to respond to spills at sea.

I would like to close with a quote from Danielle Giroux, spokesperson for the St-Lawrence Coalition, who expressed her opinion on the commissioner's comments. These quotations are from the David Suzuki Foundation website.

• (1550)

Danielle Giroux said:

As the governments of Quebec and Newfoundland prepare to open the Gulf of St. Lawrence to oil exploration, this report confirms that we are in no way prepared to respond to any incident related to this extractive activity. We do not have the technical resources to prevent or clean up the mess, nor do we have the financial guarantees to cope with it. This report is a cold shower for the coastal communities that depend on the health of the Gulf for their own well-being.

This bill is about financial liability in case of an oil spill. Compensating people if their industry is destroyed by an oil spill is all well and good, but what about rebuilding the industry if it is damaged by an oil spill? Remember the Exxon Valdez? Oil from that spill is still washing up on shore. The Irving Whale sank in the Gulf of St. Lawrence 30 years ago, and people in the Magdalen Islands, in my riding, are still picking up chunks of oil that wash up on the sand every year. A spill never really goes away; the fallout lasts for years.

We have to think about the long term when we talk about compensation. The fishing industry in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, in the Atlantic, off the west coast and potentially in the Arctic is a sustainable activity that can go on indefinitely. If an oil spill damages this industry, we need to make sure that it can continue to exist, rather than thinking about financial compensation. We need to think about what can be done to limit the impact of a spill.

Rather than talking about what type of insurance policy is needed to financially compensate people for a year's income, I would like the government to talk about what it is going to do to ensure that the tourism, fishing and seabed mining industries remain sustainable.

I would like to give some statistics that show the value of the industries we are talking about. In the Magdalen Islands, fishing and the related industries, particularly the processing industry, represent \$100 million per year. In the Gaspé, lobster fishing alone represents \$15 million per year. In 2010, in the Gaspé, the landing value of fishing was \$85 million. Landings in the lower St. Lawrence, the Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands account for two-thirds of all landings in Quebec. Tourism generates \$280 million a year in my region.

Government Orders

In the bill before us, we are talking about an insurance policy that would provide \$230 million in compensation. That is not even equivalent to the revenue generated in one year by the tourism industry. I would like to remind hon. members that if the beaches in the Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands are polluted with oil, there will not be very many tourists. One year of compensation in the amount of \$230 million will not restore the industry in my region. The region will be decimated. This bill does not meet the needs of my constituents; that is clear. If it does not meet their needs, it obviously does not meet the needs of constituents in neighbouring ridings either.

When it comes to cleaning up oil spills, the bill indicates that companies will be responsible for cleaning up up to 10,000 tonnes of oil. In eastern Canada, there is currently talk of a project in Belledune that could involve the marine transport of four times that amount of oil. There is also talk of a potential project in Cacouna, not far from Rivière-du-Loup, involving the marine transport of almost 10 times that amount of oil. Today, the marine transport of oil in the Gulf of St. Lawrence is equivalent to approximately 82 million tonnes per year. The bill stipulates that the company would be responsible for cleaning up only 10,000 tonnes. That is not enough. It is not nearly enough.

• (1555)

Today, an oil tanker carries at least four times the quantity proposed in this bill in the event of a spill. A standard Suezmax or Panamax oil tanker may contain at least four times more than what this bill is proposing. If one of these ships is involved in a spill, the company would be responsible for just one-quarter of it. Who will be responsible for the rest? Canadians.

Once again, Canadians are being asked to assume the risk socially, while the benefits are being privatized. Companies will get off the hook and make huge profits. Everyone knows the oil industry is very profitable. Canada's oil exports have tripled in the past five years, and they are expected to triple again in the next three.

Huge quantities of oil will pass very close to our coastal communities, which depend on fishing, forestry and tourism, all traditional and sustainable industries. As for the oil industry, we are not equipped for a spill, period.

The Gulf of St. Lawrence is one of Canada's main oil transportation routes, and it freezes in the winter. It ices over. What will happen if a spill occurs on the ice? We are not equipped to clean up a spill like that. Let us take things one step at a time.

It is all well and good to want to make companies liable for up to \$230 million, but it is nowhere near enough. It is better than what we have now, where companies are liable for \$35 million. At least that will go up to \$230 million. A year ago, the Conservatives were talking about \$1 billion, but they decided it was too much.

I would remind the House that some countries put no limit on a company's liability. Norway, for example, has no limit. Companies responsible for a spill are responsible for the cost of cleanup, period.

By the way, Norway's oil economy is not suffering. Growth is good and the industry is doing well. The country has money and is protecting the environment at the same time. Both are possible. I do not know why we in Canada cannot understand that companies need

to be accountable. If the polluter is not liable, someone else will be, and that will be us, the taxpayers. I think taxpayers have paid enough already.

The government keeps saying that taxpayers are paying too much. Frankly, if the government is trying to tell Canadian taxpayers that they should be subsidizing oil companies, Canadians will be left scratching their heads and wondering why they should have to compensate them.

Those companies have plenty of money, since that industry is extremely profitable. I think they can start assuming liability for any pollution they might cause.

A boat will not necessarily cause a spill, as we know. Some boats go up and down the east or west coast on a daily basis. They go by all the time. I just have to look around me when I am at home. I see boats passing by carrying oil. We can all see them. Fortunately, there has never been a spill.

Elsewhere around the world, however, there have been about 10,000 spills over the past 40 years. We know that this can happen and we know the risks. Every industry faces some sort of risk. It is crucial that we have a bill that considers this risk. We do not have one here. Companies are just starting to assume some liability, but not nearly enough.

In committee, I would have liked to see the Conservatives remember what they themselves had promised. They promised liability to the tune of \$1 billion. That definitely would have been better. Unfortunately, this is nowhere near that.

• (1600)

Where I come from, there are several potential oil deposits in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, but the most important is the Old Harry site, located between the Magdalen Islands and Newfoundland. It is so much on the border that we are not even sure exactly where it is.

If development begins at that site, there are fears that we are not properly equipped to clean up a spill. There are doubts about whether the company that has the permit today would have the financial ability to pay compensation in the event of a major spill. This bill would not provide enough for a proper cleanup following a catastrophe like the one in the Gulf of Mexico. It definitely needs to go further. Is it enough for today? Unfortunately, I have to support the bill, because it is a first step, but it does not provide nearly enough to respond to the real needs of our coastal communities.

Coastal communities will assume the risk so that the oil companies can benefit. That is not fair. We live in a society that should be fair and balanced. The Conservatives' bill appears to be an attempt to relieve the big companies of their liability and make society take on the risk. I do not understand. On the one hand they are socialists and on the other they are capitalists. Unfortunately they have got things the wrong way around.

Government Orders

They should have started by asking themselves what could be done to protect our coastal communities, so that they can grow and the wealth can be shared across Canada. That is not what we see in the bill, which only has to do with compensation in the case of a spill. The bill tacitly states that there will be a spill and attempts to safeguard against the financial impact a spill would have. However, no matter how much money you throw at a disaster, the real challenge is surviving it.

In Canada, there is a \$400-million fund in case of a spill, but there have been no contributions to it since 1976. I have to wonder whether the government is serious about holding companies accountable for their own actions. It does not seem to be. The bill is quite simply not enough, but once again, it is a step forward. Without this bill, liability is \$35 million. That is nowhere near enough. Liability of \$230 million is a little more reassuring, but coastal communities are worth more than that.

The tourism and fishing industries deserve the House's attention. Unfortunately, the comments from members of the Conservative Party seem to ignore the fact that there are human beings and sustainable industries in the regions.

On the west coast, which I have not spoken much about, there is tremendous interest in this bill. For example, Burrard Inlet in Vancouver is the second most dangerous navigation point in that region. A ship navigating through the inlet at its own risk is thus putting the coastal community of greater Vancouver and the west coast at risk.

We definitely want all regions of Canada to be able to benefit from the oil industry. That is why the risk must be shared among all concerned. Companies should take on their fair share. I do not think that this bill does enough. I hope that the government will come up with some new proposals to improve the situation.

• (1605)

I doubt that that will happen before the election in 2015. That is why I believe that the NDP is the only party that can stand up for coastal communities. I look forward to when we form the government.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine for his speech.

There are problems in the Gulf of St. Lawrence. Conservative bills establish none of the protections that should be in place for this system, which is extremely important for the fisheries and whale ecosystems.

I think that the member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine has some expertise in this area. I would like to know if his party is also in favour of a moratorium on oil exploration and development.

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, many of the people who come to my constituency office ask the same kinds of questions.

We tell them that we cannot ignore the fact that this is a natural resource region. It has always been dependent on those resources for its economic growth and the economic well-being of the families that live there. We must not develop the region without taking the necessary precautions.

We are not properly equipped in that regard. The Commissioner of Environment and Sustainable Development was clear about that. We do not have the equipment needed to deal with a spill. In the event of a spill in the Gulf of St. Lawrence, there are industries, particularly the fishing and tourism industries, that would be very significantly affected.

We need to start by asking the following question. Can development be done safely? If the answer is yes, we need to determine the steps that need to be taken. If the answer is no, we need to take the necessary measures.

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine for his speech.

I was looking at the content of Bill C-3, especially in terms of the companies' liability. A shipowner's liability in the event of an oil spill is limited to approximately \$230 million. That is a very small amount should an oil spill occur on our coasts. I am particularly concerned about this aspect of the bill.

Enbridge's Line 9 goes through the eastern part of Laval, in my riding. It crosses the two rivers, the rivière des Prairies and the rivière des Mille-Îles, as well as farmland. The residents are very concerned and worried about potential spills and environmental problems that come with transporting materials such as oil across our lands or near our waterways.

As my colleague mentioned, he is very close to the fishers and those who live on the coast, be it on the Magdalen Islands or the Gaspé Peninsula. What are the local people telling him? How do the people of Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine feel about these requirements?

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her comments and question. Her remarks are very interesting.

We are quite in tune with the concerns of the people in Laval. We know that in the event of a spill, we do not have the capability to clean up the mess properly. We suspect that oil companies do not have the best interests of the general public in mind. We suspect that governments are in a big hurry to move forward without taking the necessary precautions.

We are certainly not against development. My constituents' comments suggest that they are not against development, but they want it to be sustainable and in compliance with the rules. There is no rush. The oil will not disappear. We know that we can get rich and that everyone can benefit. However, we do not want to assume the risk alone. We definitely want both the wealth and the risk to be shared.

In the Gaspé and the Magdalen Islands, we are very welcoming and friendly. We like people and want to help them. If we can help them with natural resources, be they forest or oil products, we will continue to do so. We have been doing it for 200 years.

However, the risk must be shared fairly. Today, we are a long way from that.

Government Orders

●(1610)

Mrs. Sadia Groghé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, first of all I would like to congratulate my colleague on his excellent speech. It shows that he really knows the file well and that he does good work for his constituents.

My colleague clearly showed the limitations of this bill. As he said many times, the bill does not address the risk, in light of the reality.

I would like my colleague to quickly give us one or two examples of proposals that could have been included in this bill so that we could have avoided studying a limited bill.

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, I would like to again thank my colleague for her comments. I know that the work she does in her riding is second to none. She is the best MP that riding has had in a long time.

I would like to go back to the beginning of my speech. The Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development quite rightly pointed out that it is not enough to make companies assume financial liability. By the way, that liability should be much higher than what is proposed in this bill. We also need equipment. An oil spill is not traded on the stock market. It is not a monetary transaction. It is a catastrophe on land and at sea that will have an impact on our natural resources and the lives of the people who live in the area.

We absolutely must have the ability to clean up a spill. This is not about whether there will be a spill, but when there will be one. We know it is going to happen. There is no such thing as zero risk. Therefore, we have to know what an acceptable risk is in this situation. Today, the risk is much too high. We hope that it will diminish with time. Nevertheless, we know that the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board asked the Minister of the Environment to conduct an impact study on oil and gas development in the Gulf of St. Lawrence and that the request was denied. We do not trust this government, which should have the interests of the people at heart.

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend my colleague on his excellent speech. He focused on something that is very important to us, the NDP, and that is the tourism industry and inshore fishers.

When we talk about spills, the marine industry and oil transportation, it makes me think of something called “accountability”. This Conservative government has had a lot to say about that. If we think about accountability with regard to Bill C-3, we would hope that this bill provides adequate protection for the marine and oil transportation sectors.

We are talking about significant amounts of money. Just think of the British Petroleum incident in the Gulf of Mexico a few years ago, or the *Exxon Valdez*. Twenty-five years later, the fishing industry and tourism are still more or less wiped out. There is no compensation directly associated with these sectors.

What does my colleague think about these vital industries, especially with regard to his region?

●(1615)

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

This government does not seem to care about the well-being of our sustainable industries. For the fishing industry, we saw this government indirectly propose the elimination of the fleet separation policy. Just think of all the large foreign factory vessels and freezer vessels that come exploit the sea. They vacuum up a region's entire resource. This causes a lot of damage. We have seen the consequences of this type of management. There has been a full moratorium on cod fishing in the Gulf of St. Lawrence since the early 1990s. Have things improved since? Unfortunately not.

The government does not seem concerned about how to grow the sustainable industries in Canada. It seems more concerned about how to export oil. That is fine. Clearly, this has major spinoffs for the Canadian economy, but it is not the only industry. I would hate to see jobs created if they destroyed or jeopardized other jobs.

We need a balanced approach so that everyone wins. To that end, we need to take the necessary steps. Again, the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development gave us direction. I hope that hon. members will read the commissioner's reports and try to incorporate them into their bills as much as possible.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before we resume debate, 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 Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Fisheries and Oceans; the hon. member for York South—Weston, Rail Transportation; the hon. member for Drummond, The Environment.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

I will begin by congratulating the hon. member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, neighbouring my riding of Acadie—Bathurst. These ridings share Chaleur Bay, which is recognized by UNESCO as one of the 10 most beautiful bays in the world.

I also thank him for his work on major issues, which we are also facing, since we share Chaleur Bay. For those who do not know, this bay has lobster. People like lobster. There are also all sorts of beautiful fish, as well as crab, and we want to protect them. We have a responsibility to protect them because they are fishers' livelihood. People also like to eat them.

I rise today to talk about C-3, An Act to enact the Aviation Industry Indemnity Act, to amend the Aeronautics Act, the Canada Marine Act, the Marine Liability Act and the Canada Shipping Act, 2001 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

Even though we support this bill at third reading, we are extremely disappointed that the Conservatives rejected our proposals to broaden the scope of this bill. We proposed amendments, unlike the Liberals. They wanted to propose some at second reading, but they missed the boat, to use a Maritimes reference.

Government Orders

Our approach shows that we are ready to make tangible and comprehensive changes to protect our coasts, whereas the Conservatives are not. I would like to expand on the Conservatives' lack of credibility when it comes to marine and air safety issues.

If the true purpose of Bill C-3 is to promote greater tanker traffic safety, why did the government not seize the opportunity to cancel the cuts in the latest budgets and the shutdown of marine safety programs?

The Conservative government wants to protect our coasts with this bill, but let us look at its record: the closure of the B.C. spill response centre, the closure of the Kitsilano Coast Guard station and the gutting of environmental emergency response programs.

It does not make any sense for the Conservative government to cut programs at marine communications and traffic service centres and environmental emergency response centres, because we know that tanker traffic tripled between 2005 and 2010 and is expected to triple again by 2016. Pipeline expansion projects are also expected to increase crude oil shipments from 300,000 to 700,000 barrels a day.

When faced with these facts, it is difficult to believe that Canadians' concerns are really being taken seriously.

I would like to remind hon. members that the scaling back of Coast Guard rescue capacity and facilities has affected more than just British Columbia. The Conservative government has threatened to cut facilities across Canada, including those in the eastern part of the country. Most notable is its irresponsible decision to close the Newfoundland and Labrador marine rescue centre.

The Conservatives also planned to close the marine search and rescue centre in Quebec City, which, like the Newfoundland and Labrador centre, often conducts rescue and emergency relief operations. In fact, it responds to nearly 1,500 distress calls a year.

As a result of public protest and the hard work of my NDP colleagues, the Conservatives were forced to reconsider their decision to close the marine search and rescue centre in Quebec City, and it is still open today.

I would like to commend my colleagues and the people of Quebec, who stood up to show how important this centre is.

● (1620)

If the Conservatives really want to protect Canada's oceans with this bill, why not broaden its scope?

The measures that the NDP wants to see in a bill to safeguard Canada's seas include reversing Coast Guard closures and the scaling back of services, including the closure of the Kitsilano Coast Guard station.

We also want the Conservatives to cancel the cuts to the marine communication and traffic service centres, including the marine traffic control communications terminals in Vancouver and St. John's, Newfoundland. We have before us a bill that seeks to protect our oceans and tankers, but the government is closing the most important organizations for monitoring them.

We are also calling on the government to cancel the closure of British Columbia's oil spill response centre. It is unbelievable that

the government would put forward this bill in the House of Commons and at the same time seek to close the oil spill response centre in British Columbia. Earlier, I was saying that crude oil shipments would increase from 300,000 to 700,000 barrels a day. Marine traffic is growing and the Conservatives are cutting the organizations that might be able to prevent catastrophes.

We are calling on the government to cancel cuts to the Centre for Offshore Oil, Gas and Energy Research. The Conservatives even want to make cuts to a research centre. We are also calling on them to cancel cuts to key environmental emergency programs, including oil spill response in Newfoundland and Labrador and British Columbia.

It is scary. It is scary to see where the government is going with this. Canadians should be scared to see what is happening on the energy and oil fronts. It is not new, and each year we see an increase in the use of our rivers and oceans, both the Pacific and the Atlantic. The government is shutting down everything that has been put in place to protect and monitor these bodies of water.

We are calling on the government to reinforce the capacity of petroleum boards—which is currently nil—to handle oil spills, as recommended by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development. The Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board needs to build in-house expertise to manage a major spill, including an independent safety regulator.

We want the Canadian Coast Guard to work collaboratively with its U.S. counterparts and conduct a parallel study to examine the risks additional supertanker traffic would cause in Canadian waters.

If the Conservatives really wanted to take marine safety seriously, they could have—and should have—expanded this bill. We know that the Conservatives are making these modest changes in an attempt to calm British Columbians' well-founded fears about new oil pipeline projects and the inevitable increase in oil tanker traffic that would result from new pipeline construction.

The people of British Columbia are right to be worried about potential spills resulting from the increase in tanker traffic. Oil spills have proven inevitable with oil tanker traffic. The International Tanker Owners Pollution Federation has recorded nearly 10,000 accidental oil spills globally since 1970.

That should tell the government to be careful. Given all the cuts it has made in various areas, it is, as I said earlier, very scary.

● (1625)

The government needs to shoulder its responsibilities. This bill does not go far enough. We will support it because, while it is not much, it is better than nothing. However, it should go further.

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Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Acadie—Bathurst for his speech. He truly understands the importance of the fishing industry to the Atlantic provinces, and he fights hard for the industry and for all of his constituents.

Over the years, this government has scaled back its inspectors' oversight in terms of regulations. It has done away with independent oversight in favour of letting companies self-regulate.

This may be a small step forward, but does my colleague see this bill as another example of the Conservatives' marked tendency to favour industry self-policing rather than objective, independent oversight to protect the Canadian public?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question because it is an important one. Self-regulation does not work.

Some people might not like what I am about to say, but with all due respect, big oil companies and big money-making corporations self-regulate only insofar as it puts cash in the bank. They have no problem with that. This government is on board. This is a dangerous game to be playing, though.

This is about oil companies and the possibility of a spill that could devastate the entire Chaleur Bay fishery—an example from my home turf—and the Gulf of St. Lawrence fishery too. If there is a spill, taxpayers will be expected to foot the bill because the government does not want to create regulations that require companies to pay compensation for that. I find that completely unacceptable.

If a company does not bear much responsibility should a spill occur, and if an incident would not cost the company much money, it has no reason to self-regulate.

What we have are practices that let these boats go full tilt. They sail at 50 knots. They go as fast as they can to maximize production and make money. If there is a spill, however, taxpayers are on the hook for that. All the companies do is declare bankruptcy; some have done so in the past. There is no guarantee. The only guarantee is the one provided by Canadian taxpayers, even though the government is responsible for protecting Canadian taxpayers, not just big oil companies.

• (1630)

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to and I am in agreement with the member for Acadie—Bathurst. Our leader is knowledgeable and experienced in the whole environmental field.

Is this not just a reduction in the polluter pays principle, that polluters who can limit their liability through a bill like this can get away with a subsidy from our government because they do not have to carry the kind of insurance necessary to actually insure against the worst-case disasters?

Look what happened in Quebec with MMA. MMA did not have enough insurance to cover the kind of disaster it wrought on the Province of Quebec and the people of Lac-Mégantic, and the

Province of Quebec, the federal government, and the people of Canada are picking up the tab.

Essentially what our party believes in is that if there is a disaster, the people who cause the disaster, the polluters, should pay.

That is what this bill fails to do. It fails to force the companies that are doing what they are doing on our coasts, in our airspace and on our rails to protect Canadians. What happens is they are getting subsidized. I think that is wrong. Does the member think that is wrong?

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, it goes further than that. It is one thing for the government and taxpayers to pick up the tab, but it is another thing for people to lose their lives. Nobody can get their lives back.

For example, when the government cut the regulations, we saw what happened in Lac-Mégantic. Not long after that, look what happened in Plaster Rock. Just outside that community, a wheel broke off the train and it went off the rails. A guy who used to work in Montreal said that if there had been a team checking every wheel, the broken wheel would have been found. That wheel did not break off in Edmundston and then the train went off the rails in Plaster Rock. That wheel was damaged already. If the government had not taken away the inspectors' jobs and they had been there to supervise what was happening, that never would have happened. It is lucky that no lives were lost in Plaster Rock.

It is terrible that lives were lost in Lac-Mégantic. It is about more than money. It is dangerous that the government is not putting mechanisms in place not just to protect the fish, but to protect the people, the human beings, of this country. That is where the responsibility lies. This bill does not go far enough. New Democrats are asking the government to protect Canadians and the other industries.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise here to deliver my first speech since the summer break, following a busy summer that was full of ups and downs. I am on my feet, ready to respond to the government and hold it to account.

Bill C-3 has to do with marine safety and aviation safety. Once again, there is a discrepancy between the bill's objective and what it actually does. We already debated Bill C-3 in another form before prorogation. At the time, it was Bill C-57, which was referred to committee. The NDP proposed some amendments, which were all rejected. The NDP also asked the government to expand the scope of the bill, which the government also refused to do.

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This attitude is really unfortunate. When we are dealing with topics as broad as aviation safety and marine safety, they are often very complex and require the testimony of expert witnesses. Logically, then, if we are opening up such a debate, we need to try to go over the entire subject and take the opportunity to discuss all the appropriate aspects of marine and aviation safety in order to avoid having to constantly come back to such a technical subject. Basically, it is a little like spring cleaning at home—we have to look inside every nook and cranny. We cannot simply choose the parts that interest us. This is the logical way to go about it, but unfortunately, the government refuses to apply this logic. It does not agree that as long as we are discussing such complex issues, we should explore them fully and completely.

As I said, one thing we wanted was to expand the scope of the bill, in order to discuss in particular the closure of the marine rescue centres and the negative impact of some legislation on environmental protections, specifically for coastal environments. All of these subjects were directly related to the bill's objective. Unfortunately, the Conservatives refused to do so.

Bill C-3 also proposes to amend the Marine Liability Act. It also seeks to implement the International Convention on Liability and Compensation for Damage in Connection with the Carriage of Hazardous and Noxious Substances by Sea, 2010. Canada has been a signatory to this very important convention since 2010, and only today are we seeing a bill seeking to implement it. The convention defines the liability of vessel owners for costs incurred when oil or other similar materials are spilled.

It is very important to highlight and clarify the liability of companies and vessel owners when such a spill occurs and when damage is caused. If oil or other noxious and hazardous substances are spilled, Canadian taxpayers should not have to cover the cleanup and damage costs.

The limited liability of private businesses is a recurring problem from one bill to the next. We saw this in Bill C-22. The real costs and inflation over time are not being considered, and there may be a considerable burden on Canadians. As New Democrats, we believe in the polluter pays principle, unlike the Liberals and Conservatives, who constantly fob off the true environmental, social and economic costs onto current and future Canadian taxpayers.

•(1635)

As the deputy critic for natural resources and energy, I believe it is extremely important to understand that proper natural resource development requires a constant and appropriate legal framework.

When development in certain industries is not subject to a legal framework, investors tend to flee. Also, let us not forget that, to be developed, this natural resource must be transported. However, if the transportation framework is flawed, the industry can become unstable.

Therefore, we must protect our natural resource development as well as the economic potential of that development. To attract investment, this activity must have an adequate legal framework. People will want to invest in Canada if they know that safety measures are in place to reduce incidents, particularly during transportation.

Canada signed the International Convention on Liability and Compensation for Damage in Connection with the Carriage of Hazardous and Noxious Substances by Sea, 2010. Yes, it is a 2010 convention.

In the fall of 2012, quite recently, two large transport vessels ran aground on the west coast because of the marine traffic. Today, we are under the impression that, with this bill, the Conservative government is trying to apologize for its inaction over the last few years.

The government may have wanted to show goodwill when it signed the international convention in 2010, but years have passed. There have been disasters since then and oil spills on the west coast. We are only now debating this bill at third reading. It took a long time.

Throughout the various stages of the bill, many members have pointed out the government's failings when it comes to safety. Shutting down marine safety programs and cutting budgets is certainly no way to promote safety. The Conservative cuts are being felt even in our air force.

Recently, the Canadian air force had to resort to stealing parts from search and rescue aircraft kept in museums to keep its planes going. We will not even mention the Liberals' recycled submarines. Obviously, things are not any better on that side.

Part II of the bill amends the Aeronautics Act to give the Airworthiness Investigative Authority powers to investigate aviation accidents or incidents involving civilians and aircraft or aeronautical installations operated by or on behalf of the Department of National Defence, the Canadian Forces or a visiting force.

In other words, instead of letting the Transportation Safety Board of Canada investigate when a military aircraft is involved, the investigation could be done by an authority under the Department of National Defence, which is therefore not required to release its report, as is the case for the Transportation Safety Board of Canada.

A witness from the armed forces told us that some reports and secrets are not made public for security reasons. However, when we hear that the armed forces consider a secret the number of soldiers taking drugs for erectile dysfunction, we realize that we might not agree on what should be secret in the armed forces.

Many flights pass through my region of Abitibi-Témiscamingue, including military planes that fly over the northern part. The consequences of one accident could help us avoid other accidents with civilian aircraft, but unfortunately, since this information is sent to National Defence and the report is not made public, other avoidable accidents can occur. I find it unfortunate that the government's decision is to favour this new way of doing things.

•(1640)

Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

There have been 10,000 accidental oil spills since 1970. That is not nothing. We cannot say there have been 1,000, which would still be too many.

I would like to know what my colleague thinks of the famous double-hull tankers, which do not seem to be protecting our oceans, our seas or nature in general.

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Joliette for her question.

Double-hull tankers are not indestructible. Accidents and spills can happen with these boats as well. They are not the miracle solution. In any event, since 1993, in accordance with a convention, Canada is obliged to use double-hull boats and there are still spills.

As far as marine safety is concerned, it is not just the design of the boat that affects the number of spills. Marine safety laws and their enforcement play a role too. When governments, like the Conservative government, are lax with marine safety, then Canada's oil industry is affected and pays the price. If we want sustainable development of our resources, then we must have appropriate safety measures in place in order for Canadians to trust an industry.

•(1645)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member could provide some comment with regard to the issue of liability insurance on the first aspect of the legislation, which deals with aviation industry participants. There is a great deal of concern that it was necessary for the government to get directly involved. This stems back from 9/11, where acts of war and so forth may see a plane go down. It deals with that in part.

I wonder if there is a position that the NDP is taking on that particular issue.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, I will draw an analogy with the current Ebola crisis.

A number of airlines have cancelled flights that fly over the affected area, which has adverse consequences for the people there. Humanitarian workers are having a hard time getting there.

In a conflict situation, if airlines stop flying to certain regions for insurance purposes, humanitarian aid might be compromised, as it may no longer be able to get there. It might take considerably longer for aid to get there when humanitarian workers have to land in countries that are much further away and travel the rest of the route by land.

Providing compensation to the airlines might help keep certain flights to risk areas so that the people can continue to benefit from the humanitarian help they need. Nonetheless, even if the government committed to getting involved in the insurance aspect of things, there is no guarantee that the airlines will maintain their flights. We will have to see if this really has an impact and whether

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the airlines will agree to maintain these flights as a result of the government's commitment.

Ms. Francine Raynault (Joliette, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will have the honour of sharing my time with my colleague from British Columbia Southern Interior.

As we know, the government recently authorized an increase in oil shipping on the St. Lawrence River, including the building of special port facilities in Sorel.

Even though Joliette is not right on the river, which is in the riding of my colleague from Berthier—Maskinongé, everyone in Lanaudière has a special place in their hearts for the river there.

In fact, many of my constituents spend time there every weekend cycling, fishing, boating or simply hiking the many kilometres of trails.

At the mouth of Lake Saint-Pierre, between Sorel and Berthierville, the Berthier Islands form an archipelago of 103 islands with magnificent mangroves and flood plains that provide a habitat for many rare animal species, such as silver fox and salamanders. In the spring, one can admire the splendour of the area while driving on highway 40.

History is also very much present in the region, which was the site of diplomatic meetings held by Champlain with the aboriginal people, and the mouth of the Richelieu River nearby saw a lot of action during the Iroquois wars.

In addition, writer Germaine Guèvremont found inspiration in the archipelago, which became the backdrop for *Le Survenant*, a novel she wrote in 1945.

In that sense, the announced increase in tanker traffic got me thinking, and I am saddened that the government did not see fit to include in Bill C-3 the NDP's proposed clauses regarding tanker traffic.

I wanted to make that point before talking a little more about the actual bill. I really wish we had taken the opportunity to better protect an area that is so important to my region.

The Berthier Islands are an area that I know well, that I frequent and that are part of the identity of the Lanaudière region. I am convinced that, across Canada, people who live close to potentially polluting projects have similar fears.

That is why I am glad Bill C-3 implements the International Convention on Liability and Compensation for Damage in Connection with the Carriage of Hazardous and Noxious Substances by Sea, 2010.

If the Conservatives truly supported marine and aviation safety as they claim to, they would have accepted our suggestion to widen the scope of the bill.

We in the NDP do not believe that Canadian taxpayers should have to pay the difference when the cleanup cost in the wake of a spill of hazardous and noxious substances is higher than \$500 million.

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The NDP is committed to ensuring that oil spills never occur. The Conservative record is the exact opposite: they closed the British Columbia oil spill response centre, shut down the Kitsilano Coast Guard Station and gutted environmental emergency response programs.

As I said earlier, this bill does include some positive aspects, which is why I am not opposed to it. One of those aspects is the required pilotage and increased surveillance, which will reduce the risk of accidents.

However, that is not enough. The drastic cuts to oil transportation safety in last year's budget speak volumes.

The Conservatives say that these cuts are simply trimming the fat, but if they trim too much, the animal will end up dead. This is not liposuction, this is a flesh-eating disease.

The scaling back of the Coast Guard's rescue capacity and facilities has affected the entire country.

•(1650)

In Quebec, public pressure and the work of the NDP saved the Quebec City marine rescue sub-centre, which responds to 1,500 calls a day. That is not insignificant, 1,500 calls a day. This announced closure endangered the lives of francophone sailors and demonstrates the Conservatives' complete disregard for marine safety, science and public health.

The NDP requested that the scope of Bill C-3 be broadened to reverse the cutbacks to our national Coast Guard response capacity.

In addition, this bill grants the military the investigatory powers that were traditionally reserved for the Transportation Safety Board. In the event of an aviation accident involving the military, the Minister of National Defence is the only one who will be notified of the outcome of the investigation. It will not be made public.

We have long known that the Conservatives are afraid of transparency. During the last election campaign, they refused to answer more than five questions a day, in order to direct the journalists' work. The government they formed is not much different. They have extended the notion of cabinet secrecy to nearly everything and now they want to hide the results of investigations involving the military. That is unacceptable. It is like something out of an episode of *The X-Files*.

In general, Bill C-3 seems to focus on the administrative side instead of seriously addressing the risk that marine activities involving oil or hazardous materials pose to the environment.

A number of environmental NGOs have highlighted the inadequacy of Canada's safety measures with respect to oil tanker traffic. Why did the government not seize this opportunity with Bill C-3? It could have done much more. In addition to meaningfully enhancing safety with respect to accountability, the government could have made sure that Canadians do not end up with a hefty bill when a spill happens. That is the least it could have done.

We saw what happened in Lac-Mégantic. Deregulation and the government's complicit negligence made it possible for a foreign company to destroy everything for financial gain. It goes without

saying that companies will always look to maximize their profits, since that is why they exist.

A responsible government's role is to set parameters, for example, by ensuring that a crisis can be avoided, and that if one does happen we can seek compensation. Was MMA able to compensate the people of Lac-Mégantic? Not at all. The company's obscure insurer, registered abroad, was not in a position to pay.

This situation could happen again, and, quite frankly, Bill C-3 would have been nice, so I could tour around the Berthier Islands without worrying about ending up in a wasteland.

That said, I will vote in favour of this bill, since I think it is a step in the right direction. However, it is a self-serving step that was meant to placate opposition to the projects supported by this government, such as the northern gateway project. It is, nevertheless, a step forward.

I wanted to take this opportunity to talk about the risks we are facing and that we will continue to face as long as we do not adopt an approach that is environmentally responsible.

•(1655)

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Joliette for the tour of her region. She told us about the beautiful vistas in the riding that borders Lake Saint-Pierre and the St. Lawrence River. My riding also borders the St. Lawrence River and this natural waterway is of unquestionable economic importance for all of Quebec and Canada, not just because of the St. Lawrence Seaway, but also because it is a tourist attraction for all Canadians.

My colleague did a good job of explaining the importance of intelligent regulation and having inspectors on land and water to protect the Canadian public. I would like her to elaborate on that and reaffirm the importance of intelligent regulation.

Ms. Francine Raynault: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

It is true that if she ever has the opportunity to visit the Berthier Islands in the spring, or at any time of the year, she will see that it is truly magnificent. There is such a natural diversity of animals, flowers, trees and many other things. It is truly beautiful and it absolutely must be protected by laws that are tougher than the ones we have now. We also need inspectors on land and water across Canada. It is important to have them because we would know the extent of spills and which vessels spill oil while heading to Quebec City, Montreal or elsewhere along the St. Lawrence. This river is a navigable waterway that has always crossed Quebec.

I agree with my colleague. We absolutely must have tougher laws to ensure that those who spoil nature pay the cost of cleaning up. These are not penniless companies. In principle, they are there to make money. Thus, if they do not maintain their vessels so that they protect the population and nature, I believe that they must pay for the damage.

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• (1700)

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like my colleague's opinion on something.

She said that for all kinds of reasons, it is important to protect Canada's natural environment, its ecosystem, and other such things.

I would like to once more bring up the oil spills that have happened in the past, including the *Exxon Valdez* spill in Alaska and the BP spill in the Gulf of Mexico, which caused a great deal of collateral damage. The costs are not in the hundreds of millions, but the billions of dollars. There is an economic cost as well, at the local level, including to tourism and fishing.

Why, then, is it important to protect these areas and ensure that under the bill, some liability lies with the carriers and the oil companies?

Ms. Francine Raynault: I thank my colleague for the question, Mr. Speaker.

Environmental protection should indeed be the responsibility of oil carriers. I am a native of Quebec, and the St. Lawrence River is my environment, as it is for thousands of others. It is also the environment of tanker operators and all of those people. If they pollute, perhaps we should make them understand that they should take the necessary precautions to prevent their ships from sinking.

I believe that the only way to protect the environment is through strict regulation. Our lives as human beings depend on it, but the lives of the fauna in the river, the Atlantic and the Pacific also hang in the balance.

As people, as human beings and as MPs, we cannot tolerate any tanker pollution.

[*English*]

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as MPs we are often asked to say a few words on a bill that perhaps we are not really familiar with, because it may not be our domain. As usual, I looked at the talking points, which we all get, to try to find out what is relevant. I tried to pick out things that I think I can explain in 10 minutes, things that are relevant. Obviously they have been repeated over and over again, but they are part of the message because we feel they are important.

The first thing that stands out when I look at these notes is that I have learned that we have proposed reasonable amendments to prevent Canadian taxpayers from being on the hook for cleanup costs and damages following a spill of hazardous and noxious substances as well as to ensure transparency regarding investigative reports on aviation accidents or incidents involving civilians in the military.

Then I noticed that none of these amendments have been accepted.

I recall being on the agriculture committee a few months ago when we were debating the food safety act. I think that between our party and the Liberals, we had proposed 20-some amendments, not to throw the bill away but to improve it. In other words, we agreed with the bill and we were just saying that we had some interesting information that would strengthen it. Lo and behold, all of these

amendments were rejected. I am learning here that this is the same thing that has happened to the bill before us.

Obviously the bill has some good points and we will nevertheless support it. However, I have talked to colleagues in this House, with the hon. member for Malpeque as well as with colleagues in my party, and when previous parties were in power, there seemed to have been more of an openness in accepting amendments, whether the government happened to be Liberal or Conservative. This kind of open, collaborative attitude somehow seems to have been thrown aside by the current government. It is my hope that any future government we have will restore this kind of collaborative spirit.

Those are some initial comments I have after looking through my notes.

• (1705)

[*Translation*]

The NDP believes that Canadian taxpayers should never have to pay for the cleanup and damages following a spill of noxious and hazardous substances. However, as I just mentioned, the Conservatives refused reasonable amendments that could have prevented Canadian taxpayers from being on the hook for damages over \$500 million. We are also committed to preventing all oil spills on our coasts. Unfortunately, it is more and more difficult to believe that the Conservatives take Canadians' concerns seriously when we look at their record. They closed the spill centre in British Columbia and the Coast Guard station in Kitsilano, and they gutted the environmental emergency response program.

Obviously, this bill contains some positive measures. That is why I said that we would support it.

Also, the scaling back of Coast Guard rescue capacity and facilities has been felt not only in British Columbia. The Conservative government is threatening to close facilities across Canada, including those in eastern Canada.

This government's plan to close the marine search and rescue centre in Quebec City endangers the lives of French-speaking mariners.

This is yet another example of this government's systematic contempt for marine safety, science and public health.

[*English*]

We have seen, for example, that in the fall of 2012 two major shipping vessels ran aground on the west coast with current levels of traffic. We are expecting, with this increase in traffic, especially with supertankers, that this is going to be even more dangerous. I submit that this is a time to have more stringent environmental controls.

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The bill has many different parts. Part 4 would amend the Marine Liability Act. A ship owner's liability is limited to approximately \$230 million. It talks about damages in excess of the ship owner's liability to be paid by an international fund up to a maximum of \$500 million. Unfortunately, this is for oil spills only. In our proposed amendments we wanted toxic substances to be included; however, this was not the case. We suggested that there be an availability for the ship-source oil pollution fund to be increased so that the money from this fund could go to pay for this pollution, rather than taxpayers. Apparently that fund has not been augmented for many years.

Some of the things we would have liked to have as part of the bill are the reversal of the Coast Guard closures and scaling back of services that we have seen, and the cancelling of cuts to the maritime communication traffic services centre and closure of B.C.'s regional offices for emergency spills. We could go on and on. These negative aspects have been mentioned throughout the debate today.

I want to mention that we need to not only strengthen our ability to react to spills but ensure that the spills do not happen. One way of ensuring that spills would not happen is to ensure we have a complete ban on tanker traffic, for example, on the west coast. When I was in northern British Columbia, I learned that if there is an oil spill and we recuperate 30% of that oil spill, that is considered excellent. If we recuperate 7% of raw bitumen, which the proposed Enbridge pipeline would bring through, that is considered excellent.

It is a no-brainer. As we look to strengthening laws to protect our environment, one of the fundamental things we should be doing is ensuring that there is no tanker traffic in those areas where there is a danger of spill. Of course with the Enbridge pipeline, the consequences of going through that strait with the waves, people have told us would be devastating, if there were ever a spill in northern British Columbia, as on all coasts.

I will close with a quotation from Mr. John O'Connor, president of the Canadian Maritime Law Association, who said:

...we believe the ship-source oil pollution fund should be involved in [hazardous and noxious substances] at large and not be limited just to oil... [The ship-source oil pollution fund] is an additional layer of protection. It's not unlimited liability, but it's an additional amount of funding that is available should there be a mishap.

We believe that [the ship-source oil pollution fund] should become Canada's additional protection, not only when oil is involved, but when any HNS cargo is involved.

• (1710)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity for quite a few years to work with the member for British Columbia Southern Interior in committee. He is a good member. When he says something, he states it sincerely.

My colleague opened his remarks by talking about the committee. I have sat on a number of committees, and amendments are not considered by the government side. They never have been in this Parliament, and we can look at committee after committee. When we get into recommendations at committee now, they are not even straightforward recommendations. Somebody on the government side always adds the words "continue to" or whatever.

The member put his finger on the fact that, in this Parliament, committees are seriously broken. Public safety committee has not

even met this week, when people are returning radicalized from fighting in foreign countries. I have a motion to go to committee, and I cannot even get it before the committee because committees are not meeting. We all love to talk about the Senate, but I see its committees are meeting this week and they are doing decent work.

I recall one time when I chaired the fisheries committee and we had 32 motions, 11 of them from government members and the rest from opposition. All of them were debated in public. All but one carried. All of them were critical of government. That is what the place is supposed to do. It is supposed to hold the government accountable.

I am not really on topic, but the most serious aspect that the member mentioned is not some of the conditions of the bill, but it is the fact that all of us together as Parliament cannot work properly at committees because the government will not allow it. The Conservatives are the majority and they are responsible for good amendments from the NDP or backbench members not being accepted.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I would probably say that the member for Malpeque's question perhaps was not on point. I do recognize, though, that the member for British Columbia Southern Interior did make some comments in that regard, so it is certainly in order.

The hon. member for British Columbia Southern Interior.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: Mr. Speaker, the member's question may not have been on point, but it is pertinent to what has been going on here.

I have sat with that member on agriculture committee before. We used to have minority Parliaments. We used to have give and take, debates, amendments, acceptance, rejection. That does not seem to be the case now.

As I said earlier, I hope that at some point in time with a future government we will have a spirit of co-operation. It did not always exist in the past, but it has existed, as my colleague mentioned. I hope we will get back to that spirit of collaboration so that when we have legislation we can say it is our legislation, that we helped to construct it, and this is what we are doing.

• (1715)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his speech and his wise comments. I thank him also for continuing to share his experience with his colleagues in the official opposition caucus.

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I would like to hear him say a few more words about the situation on the west coast. The province of British Columbia is a jewel in Canada's crown because of its landscape and other assets. Would my colleague tell us about marine traffic along the west coast and the dangers it poses?

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

First, I must say that I have visited that region. My colleagues and I went there two years ago at the invitation of our friend and colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley, who wanted us to see exactly what was happening and what it was all about. We were able to talk to many members of the first nations and other people. The vast majority of the residents do not want any pipelines or any marine traffic along the coast, near their homes. The fishing and tourism industries are at risk.

This is not a mere supposition: one of these days, oil will indeed be spilled if tankers are allowed to travel along the coast.

[*English*]

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start today, in discussing this bill, by telling where this legislation has actually come from.

It was about 44 years ago that the Canada Shipping Act was amended, and after those 44 years of successive Liberal and Conservative governments, Canadians are still being inadequately protected and the job has not yet been done to protect them. I will go into the catalyst for the changes to the Canada Shipping Act and how we arrived here today.

In 1970, there was a Liberian tanker called the *Arrow* that ran aground in Chedabucto Bay, Nova Scotia. It was in February 1970, and there were 82,000 barrels of bunker C oil that spilled into Chedabucto Bay. That is about 2.5 million gallons. At the time it was imperial and now we are in metric, but what I read was the imperial measurements. There were 300 kilometres of pristine coastline affected, and that was out of 600 kilometres of coastline.

When that spill happened, the effect was that taxpayers footed the bill. There was not anything there to protect the taxpayers. There was not a polluter pays principle, so the citizens of Nova Scotia paid the bill. The Liberal government of the time, Pierre Trudeau's government, only managed to clean 48 kilometres of the shoreline out of the 300 kilometres that were affected. This was the catalyst for changes to the Canada Shipping Act.

At the time, an idea floated around of establishing unlimited liability when spills happened. The NDP at the time presented that to the Liberal government of the time. The minister came back and said that the oil and shipping lobby could not accept those regulations, that it would make their ships uninsurable. In those respects, the Liberals said they were not going to implement unlimited liability, but in its place they would establish a fund, and that fund would be paid by oil companies and shipping companies. That is how we came up with the ship-sourced oil pollution fund that started to collect levies in 1972.

I want to point out, for members in the House, that from 1972 to 1974 there was a Liberal minority government that was propped up by someone called David Lewis, the leader of the NDP, so it was the

Lewis–Trudeau years from 1972 to 1974. During the period of 1972 to 1976, levies were collected. However, when the Liberals got back into majority territory, they stopped looking at whether levies were being contributed to the fund. Now we are in 2014, and since 1976 no funds have been put into the SSOPF by oil companies or by shipping companies.

People who were around at that time will remember that David Lewis urged Canadians to kick out corporate welfare bums, yet here we are in 2014 and the corporate welfare bums are still at the top of the wave, getting their favours done by Conservative and Liberal administrations repeatedly.

We were asking for unlimited liability at the time, and we were willing to look at this fund and we were probably content with it. However, if they do not put money into the fund, it does not work and the taxpayer still foots the bill. Here we are in 2014, and we still do not have a polluter pays model because of successive Liberal and Conservative governments not being willing to do it.

The second thing we were asking for at the time was a contingency plan. As I said, out of those 300 kilometres that were affected in Chedabucto Bay, only 48 kilometres were cleaned up. In 2001, I read a report that said the oil was still there. They could still detect the oil in Chedabucto Bay. The author of that report said:

The *Arrow* spill completely altered the lives of the people around the affected areas; the beaches could not be used for pleasure for fear of contamination. This means the children could not swim because of the high concentration of oil, and repeated proposals were submitted to government to build a community swimming pool, but they were all rejected. Understandably, the residents of the affected areas demanded answers, and more importantly compensation for the tragedy that had ruined their pristine environment. The environment was deeply affected and it also rippled through the area's economy causing financial consequences; some absorbed by the fisherman, government agencies or local businessmen.

● (1720)

Here we are in 2014. The catalyst for this was in 1970. The NDP is still here asking for the same things that it was asking for in 1970, because the job has not been done.

In 2015, with an NDP government, we will do the job. The job will be done, and finally Canadians will be adequately protected.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague. I also appreciate the history lesson to remind us how things were done several decades ago. That was not so long ago. He also explained how there used to be mechanisms in place that were like what we would now call a polluter pays system and how that system could be implemented at little cost to taxpayers.

I would like the member to clarify what he just told us and explain why this is even more important in 2014, given the increase in transportation of all kinds of goods. We have to have a mechanism to ensure fair compensation in case of a spill. I would also like him to tell us why we absolutely have to have protective measures in place to prevent this kind of accident.

Private Members' Business

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Mr. Speaker, as I said, when the fund was set up in 1972, the NDP was for it. The idea was for companies to contribute to the fund so that Canadians would not have to cover the cost of a spill. A little later, in 1976, contributions to the fund ceased. Neither the Liberals nor the Conservatives continued to contribute to the fund to protect Canadians from spills.

In recent years, the Conservative government has made significant cuts to the Coast Guard in many places in British Columbia. There is no longer the same level of protection that existed from 1972 to 1974.

It is clear that, without government will to protect Canadians, we cannot move ahead with protective measures. We really need a progressive government that will make protecting Canadians a priority over protecting friends in the oil industry or the shipping industry. We really need a government that will implement the polluter pays principle. That is something the government could do to really protect Canadians.

• (1725)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am wondering if the member could provide a response with regard to the whole issue of the aviation industry. The first part of the legislation deals with liability insurance for the aviation industry in the belief that there are situations in which a plane might go down because of a terrorist attack or something of that nature. The idea is that the government needs to do something to protect the industry.

What are the member's thoughts with regard to that aspect of the legislation?

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Mr. Speaker, when I was deputy critic of transport, a group of inspection agents visited my office and told me how the SMS systems that had been implemented by the Liberals and Conservatives were not properly protecting Canadians against air disasters. The deregulation of successive Liberal and Conservative governments has hurt aviation safety. The bill is a step in a good direction, but it must go much further.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Mr. Royal Galipeau: Mr. Speaker, in view of the agreeable nature of the House, I wonder if you might want to seek unanimous consent to see the clock at 5:38 p.m.?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1730)

[English]

REFORM ACT, 2014

The House resumed from May 27 consideration of the motion that Bill C-586, An Act to amend the Canada Elections Act and the Parliament of Canada Act (candidacy and caucus reforms), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Arnold Chan (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise for the first time in the House to join the debates, and I do so with a profound sense of humility. I wish to express my tremendous appreciation to the residents of Scarborough—Agincourt for the distinct honour of representing them as their member of Parliament.

As this is my inaugural address in the House of Commons, I am mindful of the sense of history of this place. In my youth, I fell in love with Canadian history, and when I finally had the opportunity to visit Parliament, I realized why this place was so important. Not only is this where we make our laws and establish our government, it is this place that symbolizes the fundamental value of our democratic freedom. This is a freedom that flows through our evolved relationship with the crown and with the institutions of sovereign and colonial power.

I have deliberately chosen this legislation to rise for my first time to join the debates in the House of Commons because I recognize the very important symbolism that the bill has come to represent across our country. There is a fundamental sense that democracy in our country, and across all democratic countries, is gradually eroding. Participation rates in elections have been steadily dropping. Canadians are increasingly developing a sense that our democratic institutions do not matter.

As members of Parliament, we each owe a critical duty to arrest this development and to increase confidence in our democratic institutions.

I look to my recent by-election and that of my fellow three colleagues who were elected on June 30. In that by-election, we saw participation rates drop to incredible lows. Sadly, in my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt less than 30% of electors chose to cast a ballot. My colleague in the riding of Trinity—Spadina probably had the best turnout in having approximately one third of the ballots cast by those who were eligible to vote. In the two Alberta by-elections, we saw voter participation drop to roughly 19% in Macleod and 15% in Fort McMurray—Athabasca.

We have seen participation rates in successive federal and provincial elections continue to drop. This is a broad question that all of us, as members, need to ask and, ultimately, to be concerned about.

Private Members' Business

To that end, I would like to pay tribute to the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills for the intent behind his private member's bill, Bill C-586, entitled simply "Reform Act". In reading his backgrounder on this bill, I noted that it was his intent to reinforce the principle of responsible government. It was also his intent to provide checks against the exercise of executive power over the legislature. In particular, my friend sought to ensure that party leaders maintain the confidence of their respective caucuses.

This is a laudable goal and it is an attempt to bring back the normative practices of our Westminster model of government. However, when one actually examines the substance of the bill, I have to admit that I find somewhat of a disconnect between the aspirational aspects that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills is proposing and the practical outcomes of his bill. It leads to a series of questions and concerns.

In his backgrounder to the legislation, my friend from Wellington—Halton Hills attempts to address four broad reforms: first, restoring local control over party nominations; second, strengthening caucus as a decision-making body; third, reinforcing accountability of the party leader to caucus; and fourth, reforming the institution of Parliament.

I submit that my friend's intent to codify what has been the conventional practices reflects, unfortunately, a failing of members to exercise their very rights and privileges as members of Parliament. In some aspects, the changes proposed are rigid in that they seek to impose and create controls over political parties and their practices.

I have trouble with this approach. I can fully understand having parliamentary oversight over the practices of political parties, for example, as it relates to issues like financing, particularly when there are implications on our tax system or when there might be the possibility of undue influence as a result of public financing.

● (1735)

As it relates to the organization of political parties themselves, I am fundamentally convinced that these organizations should set their own rules and that participation by the broader public would be judged on effect, or how democratically these institutions operate. Let us leave the constitution of political parties up to the political parties themselves.

I know that the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills has consulted broadly on his bill, including soliciting input from various members of this House to address the operational concerns of his proposed legislation. I applaud my friend for reaching out. This is in fact how we should be working together and returning ourselves to a more civil time, when all members in this place were treated with honour and respect.

Let me say that here in the Liberal Party, we intend to honour the very spirit of my friend's legislation. It is our intent on this side of the House to allow all members of the Liberal caucus to vote on this private member's bill by way of a free vote.

Let me also say that despite outlining some of our concerns, it is my intention to support my friend's bill and to vote yes when it comes up for a vote at second reading. I will note that I reserve my right to reconsider my vote, depending on what transpires when the bill is sent to committee and we see what emerges at third reading.

I should also state that the Liberal Party has a different approach. I recognize that my friend from Wellington—Halton Hills may have some cause for concern about the practices within his own party or by the approach taken by the Prime Minister and the executive council, but here in the Liberal Party, we have decided that restoring trust in Canada's democracy will encompass the following reforms that have been passed, by a party resolution, by our own party. These include free and open democratic nomination of our candidates; fewer whipped votes and more free votes, requiring individual MPs to assume full responsibility for their decisions; stronger parliamentary control of public finances, including an annual deadline in the budget; accounting consistency among estimates and public accounts; more clarity in voting on estimates; a cost analysis of all government bills; and a requirement that government borrowing plans obtain Parliament's pre-approval.

We would seek an independent and properly resourced parliamentary budget officer. We would move to a more effective access to information system, with safeguards against political interference and meaningful whistle-blower protection; an impartial system to identify and eliminate wasteful partisan government advertising, like we actually have in the government of Ontario; limitations on secret committee proceedings; a limitation on omnibus bills; and limitations on the use of prorogation for the short-term convenience of the government.

We would move to adequate funding, investigative powers, and enforcement authority to ensure that Elections Canada could root out electoral fraud.

We would move to proactive disclosure of parliamentarians' expenses and a more transparent Board of Internal Economy that has proper audit rules.

Finally, we would move toward a truly independent Senate.

To that end, I would encourage my friend to also support Bill C-613, known as the transparency act, that was introduced by my leader, the hon. member for Papineau.

The goals of this bill my friend from Wellington—Halton Hills is presenting are laudable. Those on this side want a House where Parliament respects the principles of responsible government and the rule of law. I know that my friend has had challenges with his own party and with the sometimes difficult nature of the exercise of executive power.

Therefore, I challenge my friend from Wellington—Halton Hills to make the changes within his own party before we impose changes on all political parties, and if he cannot change his party, he is welcome to change parties.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am taking this occasion to rise on this bill, titled the reform act, 2014. I would like to thank the member for Wellington—Halton Hills for presenting us with the occasion to debate that very subject before this chamber. This debate allows us to highlight the important improvements we have witnessed under this Prime Minister and this government in the area of democratic reform.

Private Members' Business

I understand that in politics, one of the idiosyncrasies with which we must be faced is that sometimes narrative departs a long way from the facts. People have a tendency to confuse, for example, strength with centralization, competence with control, and so it is when many critics in the public sphere judge the degree of central power in the various parties that are in the House today.

I think we should examine the facts to see how the parties actually add up on this very question. Let me examine some of those empirical facts.

The Globe and Mail published an analysis of 162,000 votes cast on the floor of this House of Commons by individual MPs. It found that during a two-year period, between June 2, 2011, and January 28, 2013, the Liberal Party voted as a unanimous block 90% of the time, with no difference of opinion whatsoever.

The Conservative Party had independent votes; that is, members of the caucus voted differently than the leadership in one in four votes on the floor of the House of Commons.

The NDP whipped 100% of its MPs 100% of the time. That is to say, in that two-year period, there was literally not one MP who dared disagree with their leader even once, which is an exceptional statement of the centralization of powers that has occurred in the NDP.

We move to the subject of the Senate. I think all of us are frustrated with the outcome of the Supreme Court ruling on that question. However, it is important to note what was at stake. The reference to the Supreme Court on the question of the Senate was actually very ironic.

I am not aware of another occasion in our history when a Prime Minister has gone to court to ask judges to take powers away from him. He actually went to the court and asked the court to allow him to give the people authority over who would represent them in the Senate. He agreed that if provinces held elections, he would respect the outcome and he would oblige himself to do so in federal statutory law.

Equally ironic was that it was the courts that actually refused to let him give away the powers he wanted to cede, but no less, it is interesting to note that he wanted to cede them in the first place, an action and a motive that is not normally part of the constitution of any leader of government, but with this Prime Minister it is, as I will further elaborate when I come to our position on this particular bill.

On the question of private members' bills in general, I should note that under this Parliament, with a majority Conservative government, and this Prime Minister, we actually have had more private members' bills passed into law than at any time since 1972. In that Parliament, many of the bills were just name changes to constituencies.

In terms of legislating, this Parliament, under a majority Conservative government, led by this Prime Minister, has had more backbenchers enact legislation than at any time in history.

Some have become cynical about this fact and have said that it is actually just the government putting private members up to passing legislation. They offer no proof of that except that the government actually voted for the legislation.

● (1740)

There is the Catch-22. If the government had voted against this backbench legislation, they would say that the government was blocking it, but with the government having voted for it, they now say that it cannot be that independent if the government supported it at the end of the day. Members will see that with these critics, there is no winning.

However, Canadians are winning. They are winning because of the democratic action of members of this House, such as the member for Kildonan—St. Paul, who was able to introduce legislation to protect vulnerable people from human trafficking, and the member for Okanagan—Coquihalla, who was able to amend legislation from the Prohibition era that prevented Canadians from transporting wines and other spirits across borders. The legislation now allows Canadians to actually drink Canadian-produced wines and beers. We also had the member for Kitchener—Conestoga, who succeeded in passing suicide prevention legislation through the House of Commons. This was serious, substantive legislation passed by backbench MPs under this government.

We now have another bill before the House of Commons, the reform act. That bill would address the 45-year-old requirement in law that a leader sign off on the candidacy of every single person who is on the ballot for the party. Since 1970, it has been a requirement in law that a party leader sign off on every candidate. Without that signature, one cannot be a candidate. Even parties that would prefer to have another form of approval for their candidates cannot do so, because the statutory law in paragraph 67(4)(c) bans them from doing it.

When my friend in the Liberal Party, whom I congratulate on giving his maiden speech, said that these matters should not be codified in law, I point out the fact that they already are codified in law in this instance. That statute forces parties to give leaders veto power over their candidates, even if the party constitution disagrees. The treasured party autonomy of which he is in pursuit does not exist in the current law.

The member for Wellington—Halton Hills seeks to change that by removing this veto power from the leaders and allowing parties to select any officer or officers they think fit to approve their candidacies.

I suspect the Liberal Party would oppose that idea. The leader of their party has abused that power in order to prevent numerous people from running for the Liberal Party. Just today, six former MPs for the Liberal Party spoke out against their leader and said that he was abusing his veto power to impose his ideology on every single candidate who runs for the Liberals. He has further had preferences for friends whom he wanted to have on the ballot for his party. He has basically used the legal authority embedded in the Elections Act to hand nominations to those friends at the expense of other people who would probably have more merit and be able to win the nominations if they were held democratically.

In our party, that decision is left to local party members, the grassroots. In practice, our leader has not used his whip, his legal power, in an abusive manner.

Private Members' Business

Furthermore, in another instance of this Prime Minister acting in a manner more democratic than any of his predecessors, he becomes the first leader in half a century to declare his support for the removal of the legal veto power of party leaders over candidates. Once again, that speaks to his willingness to cede power to the Canadian people and to grassroots political participants so that they can exercise their own will. That gesture on behalf of our Prime Minister demonstrates that he is ahead of his predecessors on the question of democratic reform and certainly ahead of his competitors in the House of Commons.

The member who brought forward this legislation has congratulated the Prime Minister for creating a space in which this kind of debate can occur. The member is absolutely right that there is no other party, no other caucus, under no other leader, in which this kind of debate would ever have been permitted, because only on this side of the House and under this Prime Minister can we openly discuss the nature of our democracy and propose substantive reforms to improve it.

For that I thank our Prime Minister. I look forward to continuing this debate.

• (1745)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to have the opportunity to speak about Bill C-586 and discuss exactly what measures this reform act contains.

The NDP has been talking about Canada's democratic deficit for a long time. What does that mean? The term democratic deficit involves two major constructs. One of them is more concrete and pertains to the exercise of democracy, while the other is more abstract and deals with the perception that voters have of that exercise.

Canada has 150 years of experience with democracy. Canadian democracy is well-established, reliable and, in some ways, *sine qua non*. We can no longer envision our lives in this country without our democracy. Even if we criticize it, and sometimes with good reason, it serves us well.

Over the years, we improved the democratic process whenever we felt as though something was not quite right. As challenges arose and mores, demographics and regional cares changed, we quietly shaped and changed the House to reflect our great country and its people.

What I am trying to say is that when real problems arise, we solve them. The major exception, and we will continue to speak out against it, is the unfair elections act that was introduced last spring. It will cause serious problems in upcoming elections.

While we are witnessing an alarming increase in democratic apathy and while strong and informed action should be taken to rouse voters and get them interested, a repressive elections act reminiscent of East Germany's received the enthusiastic approval of the Conservative government.

The democratic deficit that I am talking about is caused by obvious social and cultural circumstances. Accustomed to democracy, a growing proportion of Canadians no longer sense how fragile

it is and they forget that they have a duty as voters. This is a very worrisome trend for which the NDP has been seeking solutions for a long time.

The government, on the other hand, is pleased with this decline in interest. It is sad, but that is the way it is. However, our platform is clear and sound. We are going to do everything we can to overcome this lack of interest. That is what Canadians expect and we will not let them down.

The deficit is caused by actual practices, which need constant adjustments in order to remain effective, and by the widespread false perception that our democracy is elitist and lacks transparency.

Bill C-586 is not the great reform that it claims to be, and for this very simple reason: although it says it addresses a concrete problem, that problem is first and foremost a problem of perception. A bill is a proposed solution to a problem. If Bill C-586 is meant to tighten up a specific mechanism that is part of our democracy, where is the problem? If the answer is 42, does anyone know the question?

Here is the problem this bill is meant to fix. Party leaders and decision makers have too much power regarding the nomination process and how their members vote in the House. The way these powers are used dilutes the democratic voices of the people and affects the transparency of the system that governs us.

To fix that, and this is what Bill C-586 proposes, riding associations, the grassroots, the partisan base, must be allowed to select candidates without any interference.

Once elected, these candidates should have greater flexibility when voting in the House. This all seems fine and dandy, but in reality, what we are really dealing with is a very abstract problem. In fact, the opportunity to work to improve the concrete aspect of the issue was buried last spring along with the government's democratic credibility in a communal grave.

Candidates are not chosen the same way as party leaders. There are no major debates or massive conventions. In most cases, candidates are nominated without any opposition.

Bill C-586 is therefore meant to change the electorate's somewhat false perception that everything is decided ahead of time and the party steamrolls over Canada right before an election, imposing its own will.

That is not the case, but it could actually become the reality, which is why I am supporting this bill. We can prevent this risk right away. It will regenerate a certain partisan fervour and force parties to be more accountable during the nomination process in the ridings.

Bill C-586 contains another very interesting and very telling aspect regarding what happens in the Conservative ranks. Usually no information ever leaks out, except when a member gets fed up with the black hole atmosphere and ditches the party.

The bill aims to reform certain aspects of what is known as the party line culture. The preamble of the bill includes a very important sentence:

Whereas the leadership of political parties must maintain the confidence of their caucuses;

Private Members' Business

● (1750)

Once again, we have a slight shift in meaning. At conventions, the people who make up a political party's partisan base fine-tune and reassert the resolutions that become their party's ideological base.

Party leaders lead elected members with their own strategic vision of the issues that are important to the partisan base. The leaders are the ones who decide which of these wants take precedence, who do the calculations and who take all the risks. Members of Parliament must support their leader and his or her decisions, since together, they form a molecule of public support.

The party line is the agreement between the leader and the members of Parliament. That is what the party offers to the electorate that has put its confidence in the party. The electorate is not partisan; the parties in the House must respect the diversity of public opinion. The party leaders have the confidence of the partisan base. The base has the opportunity to confirm or deny that confidence during votes at national conventions.

When a person runs as a candidate in an election, they announce that they are supporting a leader. The election platform is a compromise. The candidate may not be pleased with all of the aspects, but they decide to focus on certain key aspects. At the end of the day, small crises of confidence are not part of the democratic deficit, since that person knew exactly what they were getting into when they signed up. I am sorry, but it is simply a reality that we must face.

I have a problem with some other aspects of the bill regarding a party's internal practices. For example, I understand that including the election of the caucus chair could seem like an excellent idea for a party that does not already do that. However, for the NDP, electing a caucus chair once every four years would be a step backwards from our current practice of holding a yearly election. Furthermore, our party has a gender parity system that works very well. Obviously, if this bill forced us to regress in these areas, I would have a hard time supporting it. However, the bill's sponsor has assured us that these changes would become suggestions instead of requirements.

Now that the member for Wellington—Halton Hills has indicated that he is prepared to change some aspects of his bill through amendments in committee, I think that the best decision is to vote in favour of this bill, send it to committee and study the impact or effect of this reform. That is why I will support this bill, in the hopes that something good will come out of it.

● (1755)

[*English*]

Mr. James Rajotte (Edmonton—Leduc, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to rise to speak very proudly in favour of the reform act introduced by my friend and colleague, the member of Parliament for Wellington—Halton Hills.

At the outset, I would like to commend him for the substance of this bill and the substantive debate that he has caused both here in the House of Commons and across the country, as well as the manner and the process that he has followed in presenting his reforms. He presented a first version of this bill last year and sought meaningful input from members of Parliament and Canadians across the country. In fact, I can personally attest to the fact that he came to my

constituency and engaged directly with many people in the riding. It was an excellent example of real citizen engagement, and I want to thank him for that.

After receiving all of the input, he proposed two different sets of amendments. One he proposed as reform act 2014 and the second, I believe, he proposed on September 11. It is my understanding that the government, as well as members of the opposition, will be supporting the bill. He made a real effort to hear constructive criticism of the bill. I know there are people who were supportive of this legislation and wished that he had kept it in its original form, and I say to him that he has shown some courage and real flexibility in trying to get a piece of legislation that can be supported by a majority of the members of this House and, hopefully, a majority of the members of the Senate as well.

To review the reform act itself, it proposed three main reforms: restoring local control over party nominations, strengthening caucus as a decision-making body, and reinforcing the accountability of party leaders to their caucuses. The purpose of these reforms is to strengthen Canada's democratic institutions by restoring the role of elected members of Parliament in the House of Commons.

The proposals in the reform act would reinforce the principle of responsible government, something I will return to over and over again in this speech. It would make the executive more accountable to the legislature and ensure that party leaders maintain the confidence of their caucuses, something that has existed since Parliament began.

If one wants to review, especially on the Conservative side of the House, an excellent example of party leaders having to maintain the confidence of their caucuses, one only has to go back to perhaps the greatest parliamentarian of all time, Winston Churchill, who became prime minister during World War II, a period in which someone else held a majority of the seats of the House of Commons. A Conservative government had the majority of seats in the House of Commons and Churchill was not party leader, but that change was made, and I think for all of our sakes it was much better. That is certainly a historical example, especially for Conservative parliamentarians.

Responsible government, as we know, is the principle that the executive council, the cabinet, is responsible and accountable to the elected legislative assembly, the House of Commons, not the appointed governor. This was a change that was made in Canadian history.

Much of this debate has focused upon the present-day situation or the concentration of power that has occurred over the past 40 years, but I want to commend the member for Wellington—Halton Hills because he has tried to say that this is a fundamental realigning of Parliament, that one has to go beyond the present personalities and circumstances of today. We all have our present-day debates, but we need to think fundamentally of the relationship between the executive and the legislative. This is something that has, frankly, perplexed political thinkers since the advent of political activity and political organization, since people started distinguishing between the different roles that the executive and legislative, or those who dispense funds and those who raise funds, ought to have.

Private Members' Business

Why is it so important to restore the proper balance between the executive and the legislative? Why should we care about responsible government? In my view, democracy is the best form of government, to turn around one of Churchill's phrases, and parliamentary democracy is the best form of democracy. However, in order to truly be a parliamentary democracy, it must be both representative and responsible. It must be representative in that the legislative branch, members of Parliament, must be duly elected and accountable to their constituents. It must be responsible in that executive branch, the cabinet, the government, must be accountable to those legislators. It requires those two absolute functions.

If one surveys the early histories of Parliament, as I have done recently, especially excellent works like J.R. Maddicott's *The Origins of the English Parliament*, which I recommend to everyone in this place and across the country, one will see that the powers of the executive, meaning the king or queen, during the early Parliaments actually existed outside of Parliament.

Parliament started as sort of a council of advisers, some from the property classes, some from the ecclesiastical classes, and even at that time they started two important functions that we continue today. That is, they started challenging the sovereign with respect to the raising of money, taxes, most often to fight wars, and with respect to the review of spending.

● (1800)

These two essential functions that Parliament still fulfills today, in terms of ways and means motions and the estimates process, actually started centuries ago in these early parliaments. However, at that time the executive power actually resided outside of Parliament with a king or queen. What happened over time was that these executive powers moved, in effect, from the crown to the advisers of the crown, the privy councillors, as they are still called today, and over time to ministers of cabinet and the prime minister within the legislature.

This was a very fundamental change that occurred over many years. Is this wrong? Some may perceive there is an actual problem with this. In fact, the Americans, in my view, saw this as a problem and chose a different system. They opted for a different system and very formally separated the executive—the president and the administration—completely from the Congress, which is the Senate and the House of Representatives.

It is very straightforward to ensure formal responsibility between the executive branch and the legislative branch. It is also simple to ensure that American citizens have more than one vote and can split their votes. They split the votes between a vote for the president and a vote for a member of the Senate or a member of the representatives.

As we know, Canadians have one vote. They have a vote for their member of Parliament at the federal level. I do not see having the executive within the legislature as a problem. In fact, I think it is a benefit. I think one of the beauties of the parliamentary system is that it is organic. As Edmund Burke would say, it's one of the advantages of the parliamentary system. It can respond to situations. It is a benefit to have the executive residing within the legislature.

What needs to happen then is responsible government. All parliamentary democracies must ensure, with this real transfer through the history of executive power from the sovereign to the privy council, the cabinet and the prime minister, that we have responsible government where the executive resides within the legislature and is responsible to the legislature. It is much more complicated than the American system. I think it is better than the American system, but we must ensure that responsible government applies.

In my time remaining I want to address some of the concerns that have been raised. It is very difficult to do so because some of the concerns were raised by people who have raised issues about political parties. I think members of all political parties have raised concerns about MPs possibly usurping some of the role of political partisans in terms of selecting or deselecting leaders. However, the role of caucus, in terms of having responsibility for the leadership, has always been there throughout history. My view is caucus members will respond to it in a very meaningful way.

I was in a situation in my first term in Parliament where we had a very destabilizing situation. It would have been helpful in fact to have a set of rules to guide us in how to deal with that in a much quicker way.

Second, I appeal to those who say the bill has been amended too much and not enough has been retained from the original bill to pass. The member for Wellington—Halton Hills has introduced a piece of legislation and has tried to be as constructive as he can to get support from all political parties so it has near unanimous support to pass in the House.

I therefore ask all members of Parliament to support this important bill to redress the imbalances that have occurred over decades in our country. The powers of the executive have grown and the strength of the legislative branch, unfortunately, has diminished. We need to restore the proper balance between the executive and the legislative. A true parliamentary democracy requires representative institutions, but it also requires responsible government. We need to honour these fundamental traditions of our parliamentary democracy.

● (1805)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by saying that the bill introduced by the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills is part of a much larger debate we are currently having about making our parliamentary system more democratic, reforming our democratic institutions and recognizing the role of each member within his or her caucus.

When talking about a topic as important as this, it is critical that we remain open-minded and that we are prepared to hold an open discussion and listen to the ideas coming from all sides. No one can claim to be the keeper of absolute truth. With a topic as complex as this, we need to be able to admit that discussion is the only way we will all win.

Private Members' Business

That is why I would like to thank the hon. member. From the moment he introduced his bill, he has been open to discussion. I have been able to speak with him about my concerns and fears about his bill. He took them into consideration and showed that he was willing to amend his bill in light of those concerns. That is the kind of attitude we need if we are going to reform our democratic system. What we definitely do not need is having bills introduced to reform our democratic system without the willingness to accept any amendments whatsoever. We will not be able to change our parliamentary system by setting things in stone before debate even begins.

I wanted to take the time to thank the hon. member for that.

This bill will make rather substantial changes to the nomination process and the process of admitting or readmitting a member or the party leader to the caucus.

I would like start by taking a moment to talk about what the NDP is doing so that people can then understand the concerns I had.

Our internal bylaws call for a biennial leadership review. Even if our leader is Prime Minister, they must submit to this review. We also take steps to ensure the transparency of our nomination process.

We also have affirmative action policies in place. As far as nominations go, we have processes in place to ensure that at least half of our candidates are women. We also encourage persons with disabilities and LGBT, Aboriginal, and young people to run in the nomination process.

In fact, my main fear regarding this bill is that it will weaken the parties' affirmative action policies. I am not talking about a party leader who blocks a candidate in order to shoehorn in a friend or acquaintance, but of someone who tries to promote one person's nomination because they belong to one of these affirmative action groups.

I do hope the amendments my colleague intends on bringing forward in committee will not weaken the affirmative action policies put in place by the parties to increase representation of under-represented groups. Once the bill gets to committee, if the amendments my colleague will propose to improve his bill are rejected, the subsequent vote will surely have a different outcome. If they pass, however, my fears will have been assuaged and I will be free to continue down the same path.

• (1810)

When we talk about a process to expel a member from a parliamentary group or elect a party leader, we have to keep certain facts in mind. In some legislatures, in Canada and elsewhere, sometimes there are people who do things that may not be not illegal but are certainly not well received.

Currently, if a caucus member did such a thing, it would be up to the party leader to decide whether it was serious enough or still within the bounds of acceptability and decide whether that person would remain a member of his parliamentary caucus or not. It is much more appropriate for that decision to be made by all the members of the caucus.

This also applies to the leader. When he or she does something that is not illegal, but is not well regarded, the members of caucus can vote to determine whether that person still has the moral authority to be the leader of a parliamentary group. What is more, it is appropriate to ask that question.

Medical issues may also come into play when it comes to the leader. Some people might refuse to give up the position of leader while experiencing medical problems affecting their judgment—for example, because of substance abuse or an illness that is affecting their cognitive abilities, self-examination and judgment. In that case, a mechanism would enable members of caucus to decide what to do next.

It would be interesting to discuss this in committee. In some exceptional circumstances, these measures might help parliamentary groups make a decision that would not be based solely on the judgment of one person or a handful of people within a group, but on the majority of the members of a parliamentary caucus.

When I read my colleague's bill, I was surprised. Sometimes we can be a little naive and not think to look through all of the rules. In the NDP, we elect a chair every year and we have gender parity, so if the chair is a man, the vice-chair will automatically be a woman and vice versa. I was surprised to find out that that is not the norm everywhere. Naively, I figured that all parties elected their chairs. It seemed logical to me. I would therefore like to thank my colleague because now I know that some parties have a lot to learn from the NDP. I think that is a bit of a shame.

With these changes, the election of a caucus chair once per Parliament would not be a strict rule but the minimum standard. If a party wants to hold an election every year, as the NDP does, it can continue to do so. The important thing is that caucus chairs have to be elected. That is very interesting. That way, people can elect an individual who is competent and who is also ready to listen to them.

Choosing the right person is key to maintaining harmony within a parliamentary caucus. The chair has to have sound cognitive abilities and knowledge of the parliamentary system, as well as human relations skills allowing him or her to accurately assess situations and intervene at the party level and the caucus level for the good of the members. Electing the caucus chair is therefore a very good way to operate.

• (1815)

I would like to thank my colleague one last time for his openness when we were discussing my concerns.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Resuming debate, there are eight minutes remaining before the right of reply, for the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Hon. Deepak Obhrai (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for International Human Rights, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour for me to rise and speak to the reform act, 2014, brought my colleague from Wellington—Halton Hills.

Private Members' Business

My dear friend from Edmonton—Leduc gave a little history about governments and the Westminster type of government. I have travelled all over the world and have seen numerous forms of government across the world, not only the Americans but we have the French. We have military regimes and we have dictatorships and we have all kinds of other governments. However, what is very clearly important is the form of democracy that we have elected here in Canada, the Westminster style of democracy, which has stood the test of time coming from U.K.

However, in what I am saying, it is dreadful that our Senate is not an elected Senate. Having said that, the House of Commons indeed is an institution that, for all everybody says whatever they want to say, is a very respected institution giving good governance to Canada, based on my own experience travelling around the world.

I have been a member of Parliament for close to 17 years now. Through this process, I have gone through a tremendous amount of political flux that has taken place in this country. I started as a Reform MP, then a member of the Canadian Alliance, then the old Progressive Conservative Party, and then the new Conservative Party. As I like to say, I never crossed the floor, the parties crossed on me.

Going through all this system over here, we learned one thing: where is the basic situation. Sure, there are always ways and room to improve, but the main basic thing I learned from all this here is that our process has checks and balances, not through legislation and that discipline but through practice. Let me give an example of that. My friend from Leduc talked about the crisis we had during the time of the Canadian Alliance. I went through all of that and I must say I give great credit for what happened over there to Stockwell Day, who realized that the caucus was not with him at that given time and took the right step, but went back out there to seek the leadership again from the members. These are the kinds of decisions that are in practice, which we have as part of us. However, I do want to commend my colleague here for trying to formalize it.

Where I had a very strong objection to his bill was where I felt that membership's voice was being taken away by giving more power to the caucuses, to Elections Canada, and so on. However, to his great credit, he heard all of our objections, and I want to commend him for bringing in the amendments that he did, which address many of the concerns we have had. I must say that gives back, in my opinion, the powers to the membership as, for example, in his first amendment by letting the parties decide who is going to be the person in charge. It does not matter who is the person in charge, whether it is the Prime Minister or whoever, but it is the membership that will decide, and that is part of his amendment.

I want to thank the Minister of State for Democratic Reform, who worked throughout the summer with the others in bringing in a lot of amendments that have now made us feel very good, so that I feel I am in a situation where a lot of positive things are now coming out of this bill. One of those positive steps that I am quite comfortable with is the election of the caucus chair. A democratically elected caucus chair is an absolutely good idea. Also the caucus would have the ability to admit or re-admit people who have been removed from caucus. That should be a caucus choice, which makes it a democratic institution, so that is excellent.

However, I do still have some little problems over here, which he has of course addressed. Again that comes to the issue of the leadership, which he said caucuses can update. What I am saying now is that it is a bill that we can all debate and all talk about. There are some positive aspects to it that we can move forward. When the bill goes to the committee, we can talk about other areas where we have concerns. I will talk to him again about concerns that I do have, and see how best we can bridge that gap. It can allow us, at the end of the day, to make a bill that is acceptable to all of us, which will strengthen the democracy in this country.

I want to give him credit for bringing it forward. We are waiting for this. We will vote for the bill to go to the committee, and then at the committee we will bring further amendments.

• (1820)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): With his five-minute right of reply, the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when I introduced Reform Act, 2014, I said I would welcome comments and amendments. Since being introduced, Reform Act, 2014 has generated a lot of interest and discussion. In these past months, I have received recommendations and comments from colleagues from both sides of the House and from Canadians across the country.

[*English*]

I want to thank all members of the House who have contributed to this debate, particularly the member for Edmonton—Leduc for seconding the bill. I want to also thank many members of my caucus, as well as the members for Mississauga, Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, Toronto—Danforth, Burnaby—Douglas and the other members from New Democratic caucus who have been up today to debate this bill.

I would like to thank the members for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville and the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, who has been a big supporter of this initiative all along, as well as the Minister of State for Democratic Reform. I also thank all who have voiced concerns and constructive criticisms about the original bill.

Change is never easy. The changes proposed last week and the changes incorporated into the bill introduced last spring reflect the input that was received.

I want to take this opportunity to respond directly to one concern, which is the general concern about imposing on parties, whether they be party caucuses or registered political parties, mandatory rules about how they operate, whether that concerns the selection of party candidates, or the rules regarding the review and removal of the party leader, or the selection of a caucus chair or the expulsion of a caucus member.

Adjournment Proceedings

I believe the changes announced last week will directly address those concerns. These changes, which I hope the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs will adopt, would leave it to the parties, whether they are party members at a national convention or members of a party caucus, to decide on how to implement these particular changes. Any rules would have to be voted on, either by party members on the floor of a national convention or by caucus members within a caucus. Regardless of the outcome, it would be a recorded vote so that members of Parliament could be held accountable, not just to their constituents but to party members, as to why they voted the way they did.

It is also important to note that this bill would not affect in any way, shape or form how registered political parties outside the House would review the leader or how those parties would elect the leader in the event that they had a leadership race. All the bill would do is clarify the rules concerning the review and removal of a party leader by caucus. In the event that the party leader is removed or in the event that the party leader becomes incapacitated, suddenly dies, or resigns, the bill would provide for the clarity and rules on the election of the interim leader.

It is important to point out that party caucuses are not private organizations. If they are private organizations, we have semi-privatized the election and removal, in part, of premiers and prime ministers. It is important to point out to colleagues that in the last nine months two premiers have been removed from office as a result of caucus action: Premier Dunderdale of Newfoundland and Labrador and Premier Redford of Alberta. It is also important to point out that party caucuses in the last nine months at the provincial level have elected four new interim leaders during that time.

There is a greater need for clarity and transparency about how these changes take place at the federal level and why we need to pass the bill.

Many wanted to see this bill pass in its original form. I understand. However, in this case, we need to acknowledge that perfection is the enemy of the good. The bill in its original form would never have passed Parliament. The bill in front of us today is very good, and has a good chance of passing and becoming law. I reserve the right to not move this bill at third reading if the committee makes changes that are not acceptable.

In closing, I urge members of the House to adopt this bill next week. More important, I urge members of the procedure and House affairs committee to deal with this bill as expeditiously as possible. Time is short. There are a mere few months before the dissolution of Parliament and the onset of the general election. We cannot allow this bill to die on the order paper. Canadians are watching.

• (1825)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Pursuant to Standing Order 93 the division stands deferred until Wednesday, September 24, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*Translation*]

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on June 4, before we left for the summer, I asked the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans why she allowed drilling in Cacouna without checking with scientists. She said that her decision was based on the opinion of so-called experts. We now know that the conditions imposed on TransCanada for its energy east pipeline and its marine terminal project for exporting bitumen products are not enough for protecting the belugas.

Belugas are a species at risk and we must protect them. The drilling, which began on September 4 in Cacouna, is putting the whales in jeopardy. In his affidavit of August 26, 2014, Robert Michaud, one of the leading scientists in beluga research, said that the measures imposed on TransCanada by Fisheries and Oceans Canada do not go far enough to protect this species at risk.

More specifically, the measure that stipulates that TransCanada must respect a noise level of under 120 decibels at a distance of 540 metres is not adequate since it has been shown that this affects 50% of belugas. The scientific recommendation is 2,000 metres when it comes to protecting a species at risk. The minister would know this if her decision to authorize the drilling in Cacouna was based on real scientific expertise. If the minister made her decisions based on science, she would also know that 540-metre exclusion zone is not sufficient and that even a 2,000-metre exclusion zone poses significant risks and problems.

TransCanada's presence in the drilling zone may scare belugas and prevent them from coming to feed on resources that are located in the same area as the drilling. If the minister had consulted scientists, she would know that the drilling zones in Cacouna are in an ideal feeding area for beluga whales. What is more, TransCanada's drilling disperses the resources necessary to the survival of the calves of this species at risk.

Adjournment Proceedings

The minister cannot claim that she was not aware of this. In his August 26, 2014 affidavit, Robert Michaud clearly explained why the decision made by Fisheries and Oceans Canada is not based on the “best scientific information available”. He explains that the decision made by Fisheries and Oceans Canada to authorize the spring 2014 seismic surveys and the geothermal drilling that is currently taking place do not take into account “the disruption caused to belugas that are forced out as a result of a presence in an area of high residency within their critical habitat”.

The decision does not take into account the disturbance caused by the noise level or the potential impact on pregnant animals, the calving process or the calves' chances of survival. Finally, the decision ignores the recent data that propose adjusting the minimum distances based on the sensitivity of the species. This adjustment, which Robert Michaud spoke of, refers to the limit of 540 metres imposed on TransCanada. It should be 2,000 metres in the case of belugas. Robert Michaud clearly explains this in his affidavit. The most shocking thing is that he states that Fisheries and Oceans Canada had all of this information before it made its decision. Once again, the Conservatives chose to ignore science.

Canadians deserve a government that makes decisions based on science, not on ideology. That is why the NDP's position is clear. We want a clear and specific scientific opinion and we want it today.

• (1830)

[*English*]

Mr. Randy Kamp (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the opportunity to provide a little more background on this particular question.

I can assure the member that the Government of Canada is committed to the protection of species at risk, and DFO takes this responsibility very seriously.

As we are all aware, the St. Lawrence beluga whale is a species at risk, and when proponents of projects want to undertake activities, the department's mandate is to ensure that specific criteria for the protection and recovery of species at risk are respected.

It is important to note that in addition to the measures under the Species at Risk Act, beluga whales are also afforded protection under the fisheries protection provisions of the Fisheries Act as well as the Marine Mammal Regulations, which prohibit disturbance of whales and other marine mammals.

As the member may be aware, TransCanada Pipelines proposes to construct its energy east project to transport oil from Alberta and Saskatchewan to refineries in eastern Canada. This project includes the construction and operation of a shipping terminal near Cacouna, Quebec. The proposed location for the shipping terminal is in a part of the critical habitat for the St. Lawrence beluga whale used by the animals to calve and nurse their young.

In preparation for the proposed terminal, TransCanada submitted a proposal to Fisheries and Oceans to conduct seismic testing and exploration drilling in order to define the geological structure of the proposed terminal site. The department reviewed the proposal to determine whether it would adversely impact listed aquatic species at risk and whether it was likely to cause serious harm to fish, which is

prohibited under the Fisheries Act. The proposal was reviewed in accordance with well-established science-based processes.

Following the review, a SARA permit was issued for the seismic survey project specifically in the critical habitat of the St. Lawrence beluga whale, but was limited to a less sensitive time when whales were less likely to be present or would be present in reduced numbers. The seismic testing was completed by April 30, 2014, to ensure that beluga whales would not be impacted.

Following the review of the proposed drilling project, DFO staff provided a letter back to TransCanada that included measures to avoid potential impacts on the St. Lawrence beluga and its habitat. Measures included the presence of a marine mammal observer, ongoing monitoring of beluga presence, and the creation of a protection zone around the work site such that if belugas were observed within 500 metres of the work site, that work would stop.

DFO advised the proponent that provided these mitigation measures were incorporated into TransCanada's plans, DFO was of the view that the exploratory drilling would not result in serious harm to fish, nor would it contravene the Species at Risk Act. No formal approval was required from DFO under the Fisheries Act or the Species at Risk Act in order to proceed with the drilling.

The project proponent committed to avoiding impacts to the species by undertaking seismic activities during less sensitive periods as well as implementing mitigation measures during drilling to ensure that the St. Lawrence beluga whale was protected.

Drilling is currently ongoing, and DFO officials are closely monitoring the activities. In fact, on September 17, yesterday, as per the protocol, drilling operations were shut down because of beluga presence in the area.

This is an example of how a successful review and approval process should function, whereby impacts to species at risk are considered and avoided and human activities are allowed to proceed in a sustainable manner.

• (1835)

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the parliamentary secretary. His comments are interesting and are definitely worth noting.

I want to point out a few inconsistencies.

The parliamentary secretary mentioned that the pipeline that TransCanada pipeline is planning on building, its energy east project, was being built to send petroleum products to refineries. Cacouna is not a refinery. It is simply a project to ship oil products to another destination. As we know, the international markets can just buy up the product and send it wherever they like. We have no idea where it is going to end up. It is an export project.

We are not talking about Saint John, New Brunswick, where there is a refinery and where the energy east pipeline was originally supposed to go. We are now talking about an energy east pipeline project that is also going to be sending petrol through Cacouna and whose purpose is a mystery to most people. We do not understand why it cannot continue as originally planned and go to Saint John, New Brunswick.

Adjournment Proceedings

I would like the parliamentary secretary's comments on that particular aspect of the project.

Mr. Randy Kamp: Mr. Speaker, let me just review the facts. DFO conducted a thorough scientific review of the work. All of this information was made available to the public and media, and work is only proceeding under strict conditions, which include constant monitoring for beluga whales.

However, it is important to note that TransCanada has not yet submitted the construction of the marine terminal for review to the National Energy Board, but when it does, the work will be carefully reviewed. Our government has been clear that projects will only move forward if they are safe for Canadians and safe for the environment.

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question back in April was triggered by a report on CBC that railroads in Canada were hiding the truth from Canadians and that in fact there were some 1,800 incidents in the past few years, 100 last year alone, that had occurred but went unreported by the industry. My question was when the government would punish the rail industry.

There are \$250,000 fines for breaches of rail safety available to the minister, and 100 unreported incidents in a year would result in fines of \$25 million for CN.

CN had profits of \$847 million just in the second quarter of this year, so \$25 million in fines is somewhat laughable, but it is something. However, no fines were ever levied. In fact, the only fine I can find levied against CN is for failing to deliver enough grain. We do not punish railways for being unsafe.

Today our Leader of the Opposition asked the minister what she would do about the sixth derailment in the last four months in the small town of Slave Lake, Alberta. That is 2.5% of all rail traffic through that town. He asked if she would acknowledge that these are not isolated incidents. Her response was that the government has been working on rail safety since 2006. Again, that is quite laughable.

We have seen cutbacks in the number of inspections by government inspectors. We have heard from the Auditor General that Transport Canada has only managed to perform 29% of the necessary audits of the safety management systems of railroads. Finally, we have heard from the Transportation Safety Board that MMA had virtually no safety management system and was not audited before the crash in Lac-Mégantic.

It is true that the 47 deaths caused the government to act. Railroads can no longer run dangerous goods with one-person crews. We only have to wait three more years until the dangerous DOT-111 rail cars are phased out, which safety boards have been calling for for 25 years, and railroads running dangerous goods through dense urban areas must slow down from 60 miles an hour to 50. Of course, the Transportation Safety Board says the DOT-111s will fail at 20 miles an hour.

In the U.S., railroads must reroute dangerous goods around major urban centres. Here, the government has left it up to the railroads to decide whether they want to do that.

The fundamental problem is that Liberal and Conservative governments have decided that railroads can essentially be responsible for public safety and that government need only review the results and do the occasional audit.

The wheel that gave way in Plaster Rock, New Brunswick, which caused an explosion of oil cars, luckily in an unpopulated area, would have been spotted by government inspectors in the old system. It is unlikely that inspectors would have allowed the myriad of problems with the MMA train, which killed 47 in Lac-Mégantic.

We have the government and the industry mantra that things are getting safer, but if incidents are not reported, how can the government say that with a straight face?

One has only to look at the most recent statistics from the TSB for further confirmation that railroads are getting less safe. Virtually every category of accident was higher in the most recent six-month period than the last five-year average. Main track derailments have gone up, three- to five-car derailments have gone up, and non-main track derailments have gone up. In fact, accidents per million train miles have gone from 12.8 to 13.27 in this six-month period. It is not true that railroads are getting safer, and that is without the unreported incidents.

The CBC report was only about CN. How many other unreported incidents are there on the other 50 or so railroads in this country?

In conclusion, the government has failed to prove that the system it has imposed on Canadians for keeping them safe with railroads is not working, and the evidence is out there. We can see with the derailments, most recently in Slave Lake, that it is not working and that something major needs to happen.

● (1840)

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me open by saying that last statement was absolutely false.

Our government takes the safety of the Canadian railway system seriously and is committed to ensuring that appropriate levels of safety are maintained. Should an issue of non-compliance be identified, there are a range of enforcement tools available under multiple acts, up to and including prosecution.

Under the Canadian Transportation Accident Investigation and Safety Board Act, which provides the legal framework that governs transportation safety board activities, railway companies must report all accidents. Should a railway company not comply with the requirements of the act, appropriate action will be taken.

Adjournment Proceedings

Railway safety regulations exist to ensure the safety and protection of the public. If these regulations are not followed, we will not hesitate to take whatever course of action is available to us. Further to this, railway companies are required by law to ensure the safe operations of their trains, and our government increased fines from \$200,000 to \$1 million for companies found to be in breach of the Railway Safety Act. To reiterate its commitment to a safe railway transportation system, not only for communities across the country but also for Canada's economic well-being and to further strengthen the railway safety federal regulatory regime, Transport Canada is currently accelerating the development of several regulations.

Transport Canada has a variety of tools available to enforce compliance and respond to safety concerns or threats to safe railway operations, such as an order to respond to threats to safe railway operations and an emergency directive ordering a railway company to cease a particular unsafe action or take specific action to mitigate the immediate threat identified.

Following the accident in Lac-Mégantic, the government took a number of actions. Continuing with our record on railway safety improvement, we have issued emergency directives, protective directives and ministerial orders requiring, among other things, all railway companies to further enhance the safety of their operations and the security of railway transportation; any person who imports or offers for transport crude oil to conduct proper classification testing; the railway companies to share information with municipalities, which will further support municipal emergency planners and first responders; the railway companies to reduce the speed of trains carrying dangerous goods and implement other key operating practices; and the removal of the least crash-resistant DOT-111 tank cars from dangerous goods service.

That builds of course on a broader record of safety since 2006, which includes everything from the important continued hiring of the inspectorate; the training of the inspectorate, also in audit functions and capabilities in light of the Auditor General's recent report; an investment of \$100 million in railway safety improvements in the regime in this country.

The list goes on and on. I believe our government has clearly demonstrated that it has not hesitated to take action when necessary to ensure the safety and security of Canadians. I can assure members that it will not hesitate to take any action in the future.

● (1845)

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, that just proves my point that, in fact, there was no action taken against CN for failing to report 100 incidents in the past year alone.

The government does hesitate to enforce the law and to make railroads comply with the law using the tools at its disposal. Canadians expect our government to protect them, not just with F-35 jets but with regulation, inspection and punishment of railroads, airlines and food processors.

The Liberal and Conservative governments over the past 25 years have systematically deregulated these industries and created a system where the industry itself, not the government, is responsible for protecting the public. Under the government, we have seen massive failures of this approach, deaths due to listeriosis, the largest recall of beef in history, and 47 dead in Lac-Mégantic.

The government is merrily handing the airlines exemptions of the rules regarding the numbers of flight attendants on aircraft in Canada, making the skies less safe. Just ask the survivors of the Air France crash in Toronto or the recent crash in San Francisco whether they would have been safer with fewer flight attendants.

Mr. Jeff Watson: Mr. Speaker, I hope the member opposite is not suggesting that federal railway companies should not be primarily responsible for the safe operations of their companies for the sake of their workers and communities. If so, that would be a first in the world.

We actually expect, and the regulatory regime is very clear, that the primary responsibility for safety rests with railway companies. The role of Transport Canada, of course, is in the field of oversight. We have taken the important recommendation that this oversight does not meet the level of expectation of the public and it is being continuously improved.

As I said, we did make significant investments in improving the ability to have oversight, over \$100 million in railway safety. We have additional actions and measures that are under way. Of course we expect Transport Canada to deliver a higher standard in terms of its oversight.

[*Translation*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during another session, I asked a question about reductions in greenhouse gas emissions from the oil and gas sector. We have been waiting for years for standards on greenhouse gas emissions from this sector.

The last time, the Minister of the Environment told me that it was premature to unveil the standards when, in actual fact, we have been waiting for them for three years. It is not premature. On the contrary, they are overdue.

On Sunday, there will be a global march. In Drummondville, many of my constituents will be participating in this global march for the climate. The clock is about to strike midnight. We need to take action. We need to shoulder our responsibilities.

That is why UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and U.S. President Barack Obama invited every world leader and head of state to New York for a major meeting to find solutions in the fight against climate change. It is urgent.

We expect Canada to be at the forefront, to take a leadership role and show some initiative, demonstrating that it, too, is part of the solution. Unfortunately, our Prime Minister will not be at that meeting. It is very unfortunate and disappointing.

That said, it is important to understand that it is even more disappointing, because greenhouse gas emissions are not decreasing in Canada, but rather increasing.

Adjournment Proceedings

In 2020, according to Environment Canada's own figures—and not those of radical environmentalists or extremists, as the Conservatives like to call them—Canadian emissions are expected to total 734 million tonnes of greenhouse gases.

Yes, the Conservative government has made some commitments, but it must be said: their targets are weak. In Copenhagen, the Conservatives reluctantly chose a target, saying they would adjust that figure to 612 million tonnes. Well, no. The expected number is 734 million tonnes, and that is not all: greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise, primarily because of emissions from the oil and gas industry.

What is the Conservative government doing in the meantime, while it goes over its own target, however weak it was to begin with? I will not even mention the Kyoto target. The Conservatives will not achieve even that target.

According to a report, the environment and the economy go hand in hand. Philippe Calderon said:

[Our] report refutes the idea that we must choose between fighting climate change or growing the world's economy. That is a false dilemma.

I wish the Conservatives would stop saying that they have managed to reduce climate change while maintaining the economy, because that is not a real dilemma. We can fight climate change while stimulating the economy.

What is the government waiting for? What are the Conservative waiting for? What is the minister waiting for? What is the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment waiting for? When will they finally impose some regulations on the oil and gas sector? This is urgent.

• (1850)

[English]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Drummond for his question and welcome him back to the House. I am looking forward to working with him on the environment committee.

Our government's priority is to protect the environment while keeping the economy strong. We have one of the cleanest electricity systems in the world. Canada accounts for less than 2% of global greenhouse gases, and for this reason, Canada is pursuing an international agreement on climate change that includes real action by all emitters.

[Translation]

At present, our government is doing its part nationally by taking action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

In Canada, we have already taken action with respect to two of the major greenhouse gas emitters in the country: the transportation and electricity sectors.

[English]

The federal government is focused on an approach to greenhouse gas regulations that will reduce emissions while continuing to create jobs and encouraging the growth of the Canadian economy.

[Translation]

In view of the fact that Canadian and U.S. industries are integrated, it is important to work with the United States to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in key sectors. That is what we are currently doing by aligning our greenhouse gas emissions regulations with those of the United States in the transportation sector.

[English]

The U.S. has proposed a draft regulation that is expected to reduce CO₂ emissions from the power sector by approximately 30% by 2030 compared to 2005 levels.

In Canada, strict regulations are already in place for coal-fired power plants, and these will cut emissions in the electricity sector by 46% over the same period.

We will continue to build on our record and work with the United States to help reduce greenhouse gas emissions internationally.

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, I would like to respond to a few of the comments made by my hon. colleague, whom I welcome back to the House of Commons.

First of all, with respect to the fact we generate only 2% of greenhouse gas emissions, we nevertheless must realize our collective and individual responsibility as Canadians. Canada is one of the 10 worst countries in the world in terms of per capita greenhouse gas emissions. It is about on par with Saudi Arabia. Our emissions record is terrible when we look at the per capita figures. We have nothing to brag about—far from it.

With respect to working with the United States, it is the U.S. that is inviting the most important leaders on the planet to New York to find solutions. We are talking about Barack Obama and Ban Ki-moon. What is the Prime Minister of Canada doing? He is crossing his arms and staying home. One does not do that. He must go to New York.

When will the government actually do its job and abolish subsidies for oil and gas companies?

• (1855)

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, we are currently involved in discussions with the provinces, industry representatives, and others about potential greenhouse gas emissions reductions for the oil and gas sector. The regulations are not yet final, so it would be premature to discuss them further.

[English]

Thanks in part to our actions, Canada's 2020 greenhouse gas emissions are projected to be about 130 megatonnes lower relative to a scenario with no action.

I want to address the member's comment about per capita emissions.

[Translation]

Despite our growing economy, Canada's per capita greenhouse gas emissions are now the lowest they have been since we started collecting data in 1990.

Adjournment Proceedings

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 6:57 p.m.)

APPENDIX

ADDRESS

of

His Excellency Petro Poroshenko

President of Ukraine

to both Houses of Parliament

in the

House of Commons Chamber,

Ottawa

on Wednesday, September 17, 2014

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His Excellency Petro Poroshenko and Madam Maryna Poroshenko were welcomed by the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, Prime Minister of Canada, by the Honourable Noël Kinsella, Speaker of the Senate, and by the Honourable Andrew Scheer, Speaker of the House of Commons.

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Speaker of the House of Commons, CPC): I would now like to invite the right hon. Prime Minister to take the floor.

[Translation]

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker of the Senate, Mr. Speaker of the House, hon. senators and members, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

[English]

It is our great pleasure to welcome to Canada, to welcome to our Parliament today, the President of the Ukraine and his wife, Petro and Maryna Poroshenko.

[Translation]

Thank you, Mr. President, for briefly leaving your country to participate in this joint sitting of our Parliament. We know that this is a crucial time for you and for Ukraine, and we greatly appreciate your presence here.

[English]

Mr. President, you will recall that in June I was in your parliament to witness you take the oath of office to “protect the sovereignty and independence of Ukraine”. I went to Kiev representing not only the Government of Canada, not only the 1.2 million Canadians of Ukrainian descent. I went to Kiev representing all Canadians from all regions, all walks of life, and all parties represented in this Parliament to demonstrate our unwavering support for your nation's democratic future and for the independence of the Ukrainian people.

[Translation]

Mr. President, little time has passed since June, but in those four months, your country and our world have changed.

[English]

Mr. Putin's soldiers and their proxies have expanded their penetration into Ukrainian territory. More members of Ukraine's armed forces have been obliged to make the ultimate sacrifice. The world has witnessed the attack on flight MH17, a deplorable crime that took the lives of so many innocent people, including one Canadian.

Mr. President, what I told you in June has not changed.

[Translation]

Regardless of the challenges the future may hold, no matter what those who threaten the freedom of Ukraine do, Ukraine will never be alone because Ukraine can count on Canada.

[English]

This commitment is almost as old as our country. It began in the late 19th century with the arrival in our west of tens of thousands of Ukrainian settlers, fleeing tyranny and poverty there to help build a free and prosperous society here but never surrendering the dream that their homeland would one day also share that freedom and prosperity.

It was expressed in the 1960s by Prime Minister Diefenbaker in his demand that Khrushchev grant open elections to “freedom-loving Ukrainians”.

[Translation]

This friendship was evident once again at the end of the Cold War when Prime Minister Mulroney made Canada the first western country to recognize the newly independent Ukraine.

[English]

It was forcefully displayed again in this Parliament in 2008 when, led by our colleague James Bezan, we declared the Holodomor what it was: an act of genocide against the Ukrainian people.

Canadians have now served proudly as observers for seven successive Ukrainian elections and just last week I announced that when the Ukrainian people once again go to the polls exercising their hard-won democratic rights on October 26, Canadians will again be there in force.

[Translation]

We are working with our allies to help Ukraine in other ways.

[English]

We have, in large measure, terminated our engagement with Mr. Putin's regime, suspending his Russia from the G7 and working to isolate it diplomatically.

We have enacted tough sanctions on business interests tied to Russia's illegal occupation of Ukrainian territory. Just yesterday, Minister Baird announced additional measures.

[Translation]

We have delivered protective equipment and medical and logistical equipment to help the brave Ukrainian soldiers defend their country and their families.

[English]

We are providing significant financial assistance. Canada is also giving humanitarian aid to help Ukrainians affected by the conflict, including additional funds announced today.

We have also deployed the Canadian Armed Forces, as part of the reassurance mission, to our NATO allies in Eastern Europe, and we have been unequivocal, Mr. President, in our support for the peace plan that you have been pursuing for the Ukrainian people.

At the same time, let us be clear. Canada recognizes the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, all of Ukraine. Whether it takes five months or 50 years to liberate it, we will never, ever recognize the illegal Russian occupation of any Ukrainian territory.

[Translation]

You yourself said that there can be no compromise. Canada will stand firm and will continue to condemn Mr. Putin's lack of respect for the law. Together with our allies, we will continue to stand up to Russian aggression.

[English]

Mr. President, in your inaugural address last June, you said, and I quote, "Nobody will turn Ukrainians into the slaves of criminals...or the servants of a colonial power. The world", you said, "supports us".

[Translation]

Mr. President, the free and democratic countries of the world support you.

[English]

We cannot let Mr. Putin's dark and dangerous actions stand, for they have global security implications, and because, as I have said before, for Canadians, with our deep connections to the Ukrainian people, this is not to us just a matter of international law or political principle; this is a matter of kinship, this is a matter of family, this is personal, and we will stand by you.

[Translation]

Mr. President, generations of Ukrainian patriots did not fight for freedom in vain.

[English]

The Ukrainian people have the right, like all free countries, to seek their own future, to seek a European future of hope, and to never return to the darkness of a Soviet past.

[Translation]

The Ukrainian people rightfully want what we in the west enjoy: freedom, democracy, justice and prosperity.

[English]

Mr. President, freedom, democracy, justice, prosperity—these are not mere words. They are the very foundation of our country, and they are the values that Canada champions around the world, not out of selfish ambition but because Canadians have always desired these things for all peoples.

[Translation]

When we help other peoples preserve their freedom, we are also protecting our own.

[English]

Let me close, Mr. President, by commending you for showing leadership and courage and careful judgment in the face of ruthless and relentless intimidation and for tirelessly pursuing peace, independence, and security for your people. Know that whatever lies ahead, Canada and Ukraine will continue to move forward

together, confident that our shared dreams and aspirations are right, just, and good.

I told you you would feel at home here.

Mesdames et messieurs, ladies and gentlemen, please join me in welcoming a true friend of Canada, le président de l'Ukraine, the President of Ukraine, Petro Poroshenko.

H.E. Petro Poroshenko (President of Ukraine): It is very hard to give a speech in such an atmosphere, believe me. I have never felt anything like this.

Mr. Prime Minister, Speaker Kinsella, Speaker Scheer, hon. members of the Senate and the House of Commons, hon. members of the diplomatic community, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, *dorohi druzi*. It is a deeply felt honour to address this distinguished legislative body.

I must thank you, Mr. Prime Minister, for inviting me to come to Canada, and Speaker Kinsella and Speaker Scheer, for giving me such an outstanding opportunity to address the Canadian Parliament. I see this as a tribute to my country and the Ukrainian people and an expression of the unique, distinctive partnership that both of our nations enjoy.

[Translation]

It is a great honour for me to address the Parliament of Canada.

[English]

Let me also, just once, use the third official language of Canada: Ukrainian.

[The President spoke in Ukrainian, interpreted as follows:]

Thank you for this great honour, dear friends, dear compatriots, and dear Ukrainian community.

[English]

To be frank with you, I feel very much at home with you here today in a country that is very close to Ukraine, not in distance but through our hearts and through common ideas.

Indeed, Canada has become home for so many Ukrainian descendants of early Ukrainian settlers who came here more than a century ago. In 1892, a century before Canada was the first to recognize Ukraine's independence, the first Ukrainian immigrants, Ivan Pylypiw and Vasyl Eleniak, arrived. They launched further Ukrainian immigration to the Pacific coast and across the woods and prairies of Canada.

The Ukrainian community has easily integrated into Canadian society. It built railways and towns, schools and churches, heroically fought against the Nazis during World War II, and contributed to the Canadian economy and culture. Later, the sons and daughters of farmers became prominent members of Canadian society: businessmen, artists, scientists, athletes, and politicians. One of them, Ramon Hnatyshyn, became a governor general of Canada. We always remember his name.

The list is long and impressive: the premiers of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, Roy Romanow and Gary Filmon; Senators Raynell Andreychuk and David Tkachuk; James Bezan; William Kurelek; hockey superstars, Terry Sawchuk and Wayne Gretzky; and also a female astronaut, Dr. Roberta Bondar.

We have high praise for the great Ukrainian Canadian sculptor Leo Mol, who crafted one of the best Taras Shevchenko monuments in the world, in Washington, D.C. We always remember that. If I continue with the list, we will run out of time in this session, believe me.

Today, the Ukrainian Canadian community has over a million people. It is strong, and now it has been demonstrated that it is consolidated. It has preserved the language of its homeland and its faith and traditions. Ukraine has always felt proud of Ukrainian Canadians and grateful for their lasting support.

[The President spoke in Ukrainian, interpreted as follows:]

On behalf of the Ukrainian people, I would like to thank you, dear brothers and sisters, for your help to Ukraine.

[English]

However, it is not only history that bonds us; it is also shared values that make Canada and Ukraine integral parts of a global family of democracies.

Today Ukraine pays a very high price for defending what we believe in: democracy and the freedom to choose our own future. For more than two decades we proudly stated that Ukraine gained its independence without shedding a single drop of blood. Now that is no longer true. Now we are engaged in a true battle for our independence. Now we are paying the real price.

Today Ukraine is bleeding for its independence and territorial integrity. The Governor General of Canada, Ramon Hnatyshyn, in his speech at the Ukrainian Parliament in 1992, just one year after Ukrainian independence, stated that we must not forget the suffering that we are witnessing. That day he spoke to brave Ukrainian and Canadian soldiers who kept the peace across the world in zones of conflict and unrest. These words remain true now as never before.

Today thousands of brave Ukrainian men and women are sacrificing their lives for the right to live the way they choose, on their land, under the blue and gold colours of the Ukrainian flag, colours that are so dear to many Canadian Ukrainians. In these dark days, we feel your strong support. Thank you very much for that.

It is in our time of need that we see our friends, and there is no other way to put it: Canada is a friend indeed.

As a commander-in-chief, as a Ukrainian, and as a father of a soldier, I thank Canada for each life that is being saved today in the Ukrainian Donbass by the helmets and bulletproof vests you gave us.

Once again I thank you, Mr. Prime Minister, and your government and opposition. I thank the Canadian parliamentarians and senators, all Canadians, and fellow Ukrainians for standing tall and making your voices heard; for helping financially with technical assistance and non-lethal military aid; and for supporting us in international fora such as the UN, NATO, and the G7. This is very valuable for us.

I would like to use this great opportunity to thank all Canadian parliamentarians for their continued support of Ukraine and especially for the emergency debate in the House of Commons during the critical period of the Maidan revolution of human dignity. We heard your voice, and this voice was very important for us. Our great achievement and our victory happened because of your support.

Thank you very much indeed for the work of the House of Commons foreign affairs committee on Ukraine and for the election observation mission, which helped to ensure that the will of the Ukrainian people was respected. You sent 500 observers, the biggest mission ever to come to a presidential election to confirm that it was true, free, and fair. It helped us to establish a new authority in Ukraine. Thank you.

We are waiting for your October 26 mission on the parliamentary election because we are determined to demonstrate that this election will also be free and fair.

Thank you for the many visits by parliamentarians and ministers, and for your visit, Mr. Prime Minister, at the inaugural ceremony. In the same way that Canada recognized our independence, you recognized the results of the presidential election. That was crucially important for us. In difficult times, you are always with us.

Also, I want to thank the Minister of Foreign Affairs, John Baird, for his support of Ukraine, especially during the Maidan.

I have a long list of thanks, believe me. With all my heart, thank you very much. We really feel the strong support of Canadians, not only in difficult times but also I am sure when we have peace and we stop the war through the integrated and coordinated efforts of all the nations of the world. Canada can help us to keep the world united and Canada can help us to demonstrate to the whole world its strong solidarity with Ukraine. Thank you very much, Canada.

Without this support provided by the Government of Canada, by all parliamentarians, and by the Ukrainian Canadian community under the leadership of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, it would be much harder for Ukraine to face the challenges of today. No other leaders or nations, I mean no one, with the possible exception of Poland, was so straightforward and earnest in sending a signal across the world to the Russians and the rest of the world that fighting a nation that is trying to chart its own path is just conceptually wrong, as is arming rebels with advanced anti-aircraft missiles, providing them with operators, intelligence, and in-flight data.

Those who were equipped, trained and financed by Russia executed a terror attack by shooting down flight MH17, killing 298 innocent lives from the Netherlands, Malaysia, Australia, and many other nations, including Canadian citizen Andrei Anghel. I think that the war in eastern Ukraine is a war against terror, our common war. I have no doubt of that.

With your support and with the support of the global community, we will win this struggle and fulfill the dreams of many Ukrainians in our homeland and across the world. Ukraine will be strong and independent and, very important, a European nation.

Yesterday was one of the most important days in the history of Ukraine. The Verkhovna Rada ratified the European Union-Ukraine Association Agreement. Do you know what my feeling was yesterday when I was standing in front of the Ukrainian parliament presenting this association agreement, coordinated and synchronized with the European parliament? It was the last farewell from Ukraine to the Soviet Union. That was a Rubicon that Ukraine crossed and we never ever will turn back to our awful past.

I strongly believe that our values, our freedom, our democracy, our European future, including a membership perspective, are possible and reachable for the Ukrainian nation. Why? Because the Ukrainian nation has passed one of its most important tests during the last five months and maybe paid one of the highest prices for being European. That is why we are demanding reform, defending democracy, defending freedom, seeking a membership perspective in the European Union.

Implementation of the agreement will not only harmonize Ukraine's trade and customs rules with European Union standards but will help my country draw closer to democratic norms and a market-oriented economy.

At the Wales NATO summit, I declared my country's desire to move closer to NATO and to gain the status of a major non-NATO ally. I really count on your support on this.

All allies have strongly condemned Russia's aggression in Ukraine, the illegal annexation of Crimea, and stand ready to support territorial integrity and sovereignty in Ukraine within the internationally recognized borders, as the Canadian government, the Canadian Prime Minister, and the Canadian people are strongly doing.

I am thankful to Canada. Your country was one of the strongest supporters of Ukraine at the summit and committed to provide more than \$1 million to the NATO trust fund. It will help Ukraine build its command, control, communications, and computer capabilities.

Dear friends, let us look beyond the crisis and war. Let us think of how to enhance the special partnership between Ukraine and Canada. This is why I am here. I am convinced that we need to pay more attention to bilateral co-operation in such spheres as energy, trade, investment, information, air space, and many other technologies.

In co-operation with Canada, we hope to accomplish the ambitious project of consolidating Ukraine's informational space. By launching the telecommunications satellite built by a Canadian company, we will finally be able to provide all of our regions with reliable and trustworthy information and export telecommunications services. There should be more projects like this.

I hope that both negotiating teams have translated our firm signal, the Prime Minister's and mine, and the next time we see each other we will have a Ukraine-Canada free trade agreement to sign.

Having said that, I cannot help but mention one particular program that played a significant role in enhancing our people-to-people contact. I am talking about the Canada-Ukraine parliamentary program. During the years of independence, CUPP has hosted over a thousand students from Ukraine who were able to work as interns right here in the Canadian Parliament, helping us build Ukrainian democracy. Welcome back, dear colleagues.

I also want to thank the Canadian Parliament and the Ukrainian diaspora for helping us breed a new generation of democratic and free Ukrainian leaders.

Mr. Prime Minister, I remember you mentioned that Canada is probably the most Ukrainian nation outside of Ukraine itself. You know what? This is absolutely true. Let me reciprocate. There are great European nations that stood as the source of the foundation of modern Canada. Canada has friends all over the globe, and the closest one is next to it. However, I doubt that you will find another nation that would say so sincerely what I say to you: Ukraine is probably the most Canadian nation after Canada itself.

I felt exactly this feeling today during my meetings with many Canadians. Thank you for all of that.

Let me refer to the words of Winston Churchill, who truly loved your country and visited it seven times from 1900 to 1954. We recall him as a brave leader who confronted the Nazi aggression with courage. In the summer of 1929, he wrote this from Canada to his wife:

Darling I am greatly attracted to this country... I am profoundly touched; & I intend to devote my strength to interpreting Canada to our people...

I have the same feeling, believe me. Unfortunately, I will not write these words to my wife since she sits here with me today. I will simply tell her these words.

Please let me quote Churchill once again. He said:

I love coming to Canada...God bless your Country.

Thank you very much indeed. *Merci. Slava Ukraini.*

[*Applause*]

Hon. Noël A. Kinsella (Speaker of the Senate): Mr. Speaker, Your Excellency President Poroshenko.

[*The Speaker of the Senate speaks in Ukrainian*].

Prime Minister, honourable senators, members of the House of Commons, mesdames et messieurs, on behalf of all parliamentarians and all gathered here this afternoon I have the honour, Mr. President, to thank you for addressing this joint session of the Parliament of Canada. Your important words have been clear and stress that you are among friends.

We have taken note of the significant challenges currently facing the peoples of Ukraine. We thank you for the leadership and courage that you are bringing to securing peace, order and good government in your beautiful country.

[*Translation*]

Mr. President, Prime Minister, we have taken note of the significant challenges currently facing the people of Ukraine. Your Excellency, we thank you for the leadership and courage that you are bringing to securing peace, order and good government in your beautiful country.

[*English*]

Canadians appreciate your leadership and fortitude as Ukraine addresses current challenges. We support your efforts to realize a successful resolution based on the solid foundation of human rights and democratic values.

Colleagues, Mr. President, Prime Minister, among the many images that adorn the chamber of the Senate of Canada is one of St. Andrew the Apostle, who is of course the patron saint of Ukraine. Indeed it was St. Andrew who prophesied in the year 55 A.D. that a great people would build a successful civilization along the banks of the River Dniro. Notwithstanding the ebb and flow of the tides of history, the peoples of Ukraine continue to fulfill the prophecy of your patron saint.

Thank you, President Poroshenko, for sharing with us Your Excellency's view of the road ahead. Please be assured of the solidarity of the peoples of Canada on your journey forward.

To Your Excellency and to the peoples of Ukraine we wish you Godspeed. Thank you for your presence and address to the Parliament of Canada.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Andrew Scheer (Speaker of the House of Commons, CPC): President Poroshenko, Prime Minister, Mr. Speaker of the Senate, fellow parliamentarians, distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen.

[*The Speaker of the House of Commons spoke in Ukrainian.*]

Mr. President, on behalf of all members, and indeed all of us assembled here in the House of Commons, I would like to welcome you and thank you for addressing us here today.

[*English*]

It is a rare and special occurrence when heads of state or foreign dignitaries address a joint session of our Parliament, and even rarer

still to have a joint address during world events such as we are witnessing today. Your inspirational words are given even greater historical significance when we consider the current situation facing Ukraine.

As has already been mentioned, the links between our two great countries are well known, and they run deep. Ukrainians have made their mark in many areas across Canada. From vibrant communities in our large cities to enclaves across the Prairies, their contribution to Canada's social fabric has been profound.

[*Translation*]

The links that exist between the citizens of our two countries certainly help to draw us closer together. What has cemented the bonds of friendship however, particularly since 1991, has been our common, principled stances towards democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

[*English*]

For those of us who were fortunate enough to be sitting as members of Parliament when His Excellency President Viktor Yushchenko addressed the chamber in May of 2008, we will recall that he observed that in the previous 90 years, Ukraine had declared its independence six times. He said that he did not want the range of historic tragedies to be repeated in today's history of Ukraine. What President Yushchenko then described, in what may have been more abstract or theoretical terms, has become all too real today.

Canadian parliamentarians have followed closely as recent events have unfolded in your country and have been inspired by the courage and perseverance that has been repeatedly demonstrated by Ukrainians in recent months. This Parliament has expressed its resolute support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and for the Ukrainian people and their determination to realize a free, democratic, peaceful, and prosperous future.

While there are no doubt many challenges and uncertainties for your country and its people, one thing that is certain, however, is that this Parliament, and Canadians across the country, are watching closely and stand united in support of Ukraine.

Thank you. Merci. *Slava Ukraini.*

[*Applause*]

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