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Thursday, October 2, 2014

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Thursday, October 2, 2014

The House met at 10 a.m.

[English]

Prayers

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

• (1005)

[English]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the following reports from the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs: the 19th report in relation to the question of privilege related to Elections Canada and the member for Selkirk—Interlake, and the 20th report requesting an extension of 30 calendar days to consider matters related to Motion No. 489. If the House gives its consent, I should like to move concurrence at this time.

I would also ask that the 18th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs that was presented on Tuesday be concurred in.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent for the hon. member for Elgin—Middlesex—London to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

[Translation]

PETITIONS

CANADA POST

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting two petitions on behalf of my constituents.

Both of them are protesting the changes to Canada Post that will put an end to home mail delivery. The people of my riding are very concerned about this because there are many seniors and people with disabilities. As well, there are not many places to install community mailboxes. That is why I am presenting these two petitions.

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Bev Shipley (Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a couple of petitions I would like to present that come from across Canada.

The current drinking and driving laws in Canada are a concern, and the petitioners want those changed because when it involves death, it needs to move into the Criminal Code of Canada.

The offence would fall under vehicular manslaughter. There are a number of conditions the petitioners have listed, which I will not go through. It would hold people accountable when they are under the influence of drugs or alcohol and kill someone and, in addition, leave the scene.

I submit these petitions on behalf of people across Canada.

ROUGE NATIONAL PARK

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, later today we will be debating a bill about Rouge Park, which is very good timing, because I have a petition about Rouge national park. The signatories say that it is commendable that the Government of Canada plans to create Rouge national park and talk about why it is such an important place, but they point out that the bill ignores the ecological vision and policies of approved Rouge Park plans and ignores the ecological integrity of the existing Rouge Park and true Canadian national parks.

They have great concerns with the bill as presented, and the petitioners and I look forward to the minister's response.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I too have a petition on the Rouge Park from literally hundreds of people who live in and around the Rouge Park. They want a 100-square-kilometre park, a park that strengthens and implements the ecological vision of previous plans, an ecological corridor that would join the park from Lake Ontario up to Oak Ridges Moraine, and an open, public, and transparent planning process.

It is ironic that the bill that is scheduled to be debated today actually achieves none of those things, so I look forward to the minister reconciling the presentation of her bill with this petition.

Routine Proceedings

Hon. John Duncan: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order, we are here to deliver petitions, not to make a speech talking about how the petition relates to some piece of legislation that might be before the House. That is absolutely inappropriate.

The Speaker: I will take this opportunity to remind members that when they table petitions, they are supposed to provide a very succinct summary of the petition itself, so we can continue moving on, getting as many in as possible.

[*Translation*]

CANADA POST

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, some 100 people from my riding have signed this petition.

[*English*]

The petition states that between 6,000 and 8,000 Canada Post workers will lose their jobs and that the reduction in service could lead to the privatization of Canada Post, which is an essential public service.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada to reject Canada Post's plan for reduced service and to explore other options for updating the crown corporation business plan.

EATING DISORDERS

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition regarding eating disorders, such as anorexia and bulimia, which are serious mental health illnesses that can be fatal.

More than 600,000 Canadians have been affected by eating disorders. The sooner someone receives the treatment he or she needs, the better the chance of a good recovery. However, Canadians suffer long waiting lists for help and limited access to mental health services.

The petitioners call upon the government to work with the provinces, territories, and stakeholders to develop a comprehensive pan-Canadian strategy for eating disorders, including better prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and support.

• (1010)

CLIMATE CHANGE

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege today of tabling a petition from Albertans calling on the government to support the climate change accountability act.

The petitioners express concern about the inaction by the government on addressing climate change and the cancellation of the eco-energy retrofit program, which could save millions of dollars for homeowners, while the government continues to subsidize the oil and gas industry and not sufficiently supporting public transit.

The petitioners are calling on the government to support the New Democrat climate change accountability act to reduce greenhouse gas and to hold the government accountable.

41ST GENERAL ELECTION

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

The first petition is from residents, primarily of the Vancouver area, who wish to draw the attention of the Government of Canada to the need for a full, independent inquiry into the source of the fraudulent robocalls that occurred in the 2011 election.

ROUGE NATIONAL PARK

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from hundreds of residents in the Toronto area and the Scarborough area, dealing with the question of the Rouge Valley national park.

The petitioners are calling on the government to ensure that the proposed national park is 100 square kilometres and that it represents and respects the ecological vision of numerous previous studies.

The petitioners call for the protection of the 600-metre-wide wooded ecological corridor, as well as numerous other points. I submit this and await the minister's response.

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I stand with two petitions to present.

The first is a petition to stand up for Canadian democracy. Now that Bill C-23 has been passed, the petitioners ask for the government to bring forward genuine electoral reform to stop fraud and prevent money politics from distorting our elections.

There are hundreds of signatures on the petition.

DEMENTIA

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is calling on the government to support the bill from my colleague from Nickel Belt, Bill C-356, an act respecting a national strategy for dementia.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very honoured to rise today and present petitions on behalf of citizens from the great city of Sudbury and also from my great riding of Sudbury.

The petitioners are calling on the government to look at a national dementia strategy. There are many points that are highlighted in this petition.

The petitioners are calling for the Minister of Health and this House to look at passing the private member's bill from my hon. colleague from Nickel Belt, Bill C-356.

INSECT POLLINATORS

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to present a petition today to protect insect pollinators.

Government Orders

The signatories to this petition note the increasing mortality rates for bees and other insect pollinators, which has been on the rise for three years. They also note that honey bees alone contribute more than \$2.2 billion to Canada's agriculture economy.

The petitioners are calling on the House to develop a strategy to address this phenomenon, including encouraging seed companies to produce and facilitate the purchase of seed that is not treated with neonicotinoids.

* * *

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.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

COMBATING COUNTERFEIT PRODUCTS ACT

The House resumed from September 19 consideration of the motion that Bill C-8, An Act to amend the Copyright Act and the Trade-marks Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, be read the third time and passed.

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-8, the combating counterfeit products act. What a great short title for a bill. Who could possibly not be against counterfeit products coming into our country, especially when they may pose serious health and safety risks for Canadians? Certainly New Democrats are against that. However, despite the fact that the bill tries to frame the debate in the now infamous George Bush way of suggesting "you are either with us, or you're against us", my NDP colleagues and I take our responsibilities here in the House very seriously, and we proposed a number of amendments that would have vastly improved the bill, so yes, despite supporting the thrust of the bill, we were at times critical of some of its provisions.

Let me not get ahead of myself. I will speak to our proposed amendments in due course. First though, let me spend a moment commenting on the bill as a whole. Bill C-8 would amend both the Copyright Act and the Trade-marks Act so as to strengthen enforcement of copyright and trademark rights and to curtail commercial activity involving infringing copies or counterfeit trademark goods.

To that end, the bill would add two new criminal offences under the Copyright Act, for possession and exportation of infringing copies, and create offences for selling or offering counterfeit goods on a commercial scale. It would also create a prohibition against importing or exporting infringing copies and counterfeit goods and introduce some balance to that prohibition by creating two exceptions: one, for personal use, meaning items in one's possession or baggage; and two, for items that are in transit.

On the enforcement side, the bill would grant new ex officio powers to border officials to detain infringing copies or counterfeit goods. This is a significant policy shift. Until now, border officials required private rights holders to obtain a court order before seizing infringing copies or goods. I will have much more to say about that in a moment, but first let me continue with my quick overview of Bill C-8.

The bill would also grant new ex officio powers to the Minister of Public Safety and border officials to share information on detained goods with rights holders. Lastly, it would widen the scope of what can be trademarked to the features found in the broad definition of "sign", including colour, shapes, scents, taste, et cetera.

There can be no doubt that dealing with counterfeiting and infringement is important to both Canadian businesses and consumers, especially as I said before, where counterfeit goods may put the health or safety of Canadians at risk. However the bill is only as good as its enforcement. The strongest laws in the world do not mean a thing if governments are not willing to dedicate the necessary resources to crack down on counterfeit products coming into our country. When I look at the Conservative government's track record in that regard, I fear that we might be creating a paper tiger.

It is very difficult to see how a bill like this would be implemented, when last year alone the Conservatives slashed \$143 million in funding to the Canada Border Services Agency, which further reduced front-line officers and harmed the agency's ability to monitor our borders. In fact, CBSA's report on plans and priorities indicates a loss of 549 full-time employees by 2015.

When I asked the minister about that at committee, he said that no new resources would be needed to implement the bill, but that means that border officials and the RCMP would have to reallocate existing resources to enforce this new law and that begs two questions. Which of the functions that they are currently performing to keep Canadians safe are they going to drop to enforce Bill C-8; or are they really not going to get serious about combatting counterfeit goods, in which case, why are we passing this bill? We never did get a satisfactory answer to that question, but it is a point that we will continue to press because it is critical to the successful fight against counterfeiting.

Government Orders

I want to move on now to a different issue. Canadians will remember that my NDP colleagues and I have often criticized the Conservative government for failing to take a balanced approach to copyright legislation in the past. The government's record was far from stellar. I do want to give the government some credit where credit is due. Bill C-8 contains important measures to protect consumer and individual rights, and my NDP colleagues and I worked hard at committee to make sure that these measures were maintained and strong.

When dealing with intellectual property, it is imperative that we adopt an approach that strikes a balance between the interests of rights holders and the interests of users and consumers. At first, alarm bells went off when the deputy minister for the Department of Industry said that Bill C-8 would bring Canada in line with the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement. ACTA contains copyright provisions that have been heavily criticized for failing to achieve this necessary balance. The European parliament rejected ACTA after an unprecedented outcry because its benefits were far outweighed by the threats to civil liberties.

•(1015)

Those threats included the risk of criminalizing individuals, concerns about the definition of “commercial scale”, the role of Internet service providers, and the possible interruption of the transit of generic medicines. In the end, the European Parliament rejected the anti-counterfeiting trade agreement.

I was therefore happy to see that Bill C-8 is much narrower than ACTA and that it contains a number of provisions that offer balance. There are important personal-use exceptions and exceptions for goods that are in transit. Most important, the bill does not address Internet service providers. Therefore, while my NDP colleagues and I continue to be concerned about the broader provisions in ACTA, we are comfortable supporting Bill C-8.

Ironically, it was the Liberal Party that, at committee, threatened to undermine the important balance that Bill C-8 struck. In fact, it moved two amendments that we worked hard to defeat precisely for that reason.

The first Liberal amendment was to remove the personal-use exception for individual travellers, a provision my NDP colleagues and I believe is absolutely crucial to bringing some balance to the bill.

As Dr. Michael Geist, Canada Research Chair in Internet and E-commerce Law, put it in his blog:

Given that personal use exceptions are even included in the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement, it is shocking to see any party proposing their removal, which would result in longer delays at the border and increased searches of individual travellers...“this was one of the important provisions that brought some balance to the bill.”

Professor Jeremy de Beer added that:

...the personal use exception...[is] important...to make the whole system workable, manageable, and cost-effective. It's not possible to do everything within the resource allocations and the training parameters that our agents are provided with. So the system in the bill as it is creates a very pragmatic, workable starting point, and I would encourage us just to leave it there.

Thankfully, the Conservatives agreed with us, and the Liberal amendment was defeated.

The same was true of the Liberal amendment to add statutory damages to the bill. Having already proposed removing the personal exception for travellers and a simplified procedure for the seizure of goods that would remove court oversight in the destruction of goods in a greater number of cases, the Liberals proposed an amendment to add statutory damages, with a mandatory minimum of \$1,000 and a maximum of \$100,000 in liability. The provision would limit the discretion of judges to order damages based on the evidence.

Again, I am going to quote the expert testimony by Dr. Geist at our committee:

With respect [to trademarks], statutory damages...are unnecessary. Rights holders frequently cite the specific value of their goods and the harms associated with counterfeiting. If the claims are accurate, demonstrating the value for the purpose of a damage award should not be difficult.

Moreover, other countries have experienced problems with statutory damages for trademarks. For example, Taiwan reformed its trademarks statutory damages provision when courts began awarding disproportionate awards. In the U.S., statutory damages for trademarks has led to trademark trolls engaging in litigation designed primarily to obtain costly settlements against small businesses that can ill afford to fight in court.

Again, my NDP colleagues and I were adamant that this amendment be defeated, because it not only undermined the delicate balance achieved by Bill C-8 but actually went beyond what even ACTA had envisioned.

Not all proposed amendments were bad, however, and as I said at the outset, there were sections of the bill that could, and should, have been strengthened. To that end, I want to spend the remainder of the time available to me here to highlight just a few of the amendments my NDP colleagues and I moved in committee in a sincere effort to improve the bill.

The first was one that all parties ended up agreeing to, which was that we needed to return to the original definition of “distinctive” in the Trade-marks Act.

I understand that squabbling about definitions may seem as exciting as watching paint dry, but in this case, it was important that we get it right.

As the generic drug industry persuasively argued before our committee, there is significant case law to make it possible for a generic version of a drug to have the same colour, shape, and size as the brand-name drug with the same effect. This is absolutely crucial for the patients who are using those drugs, since any confusion could have deadly consequences.

To throw that case law into doubt by changing the existing definition for no demonstrably important reason made no sense to any of us on the committee.

Government Orders

I am pleased to say that the original definition is now restored in Bill C-8. Sadly, the spirit of co-operation did not extend to other amendments that would have been equally important to ensuring that the intent of the bill was actually reflected in its language. For example, the NDP moved amendments to Bill C-8 that would have ensured that parallel imports would be excluded from the bill's reach.

● (1020)

Intellectual property lawyer Howard Knopf told us:

The bill should propose appropriate declaratory language for both the Copyright Act and Trade-marks Act that makes is *[sic]* absolutely clear that, with the exception of the *sui generis* book importation scheme now found in s. 27.1 of the Copyright Act, neither of these acts shall in any way restrict the importation, distribution or sale of any product, whether tangible or digital, that has been manufactured or first put on the market anywhere in the world with authorization.

This is crucial, because parallel importation is an important tool for many businesses for participating in perfectly legal trade, which we would not want to discourage, yet the bill is unclear as to whether trade like this could unintentionally get caught under this bill. We of course continue to expect that important health and safety standards are met by all parallel imports, but at the same time, we want to ensure that small and medium-sized businesses, and in fact businesses of every kind, can continue to engage in parallel importation.

We heard from Jeremy de Beer at committee. He said:

...I've consulted with a number of my expert colleagues, other intellectual property experts—we don't understand how this doesn't apply to parallel imports. If it's inadvertent, then it's an easy fix. If everybody agrees this shouldn't apply to parallel imports, then we just add an exception for parallel imports and the matter's closed.

We could not agree more, but unfortunately, the government rejected the amendments that would have added that much-needed clarity to the bill.

Our NDP amendments to create a duty to use the measures of the bill in good faith unfortunately met the same end. The intent of our amendments was to counter vexatious litigation and to prevent a rights holder from using detentions and delays to harm a competitor in cases where there was no legitimate counterfeit infringement concern. This is especially important for small-business owners whose businesses may not be able to survive the costs of malicious or bad-faith claims. Again, this was a concern that was raised in testimony to our committee.

Michael Geist made this clear:

...detention of goods can be used to harm small Canadian businesses that could find the goods they are seeking to import detained, oftentimes by competitors. The absence of a misuse provision in this bill is particularly notable in this regard.

Our amendments should have been seen as friendly. They were in keeping with the spirit of the legislation and simply sought to improve enforcement mechanisms without creating new barriers to competition. Sadly, the government rejected our good-faith efforts to improve the bill.

In a similar vein, we tried to amend Bill C-8 to address the costs that may be borne by small businesses for the wrongful and mistaken detention of goods. As the bill is currently written, it contains a “no liability” provision for the crown and provides for damages against rights holders in cases where court proceedings are dismissed or discontinued. In attempting to strike an appropriate balance between

consumer and industry interests, Bill C-8 would place the cost of detaining suspect goods on the rights holder. However, as we heard during testimony at committee, Bill C-8 is clearly lacking misuse provisions to ensure that actors are not engaging in frivolous claims as a means of acting anti-competitively. As a result, our amendments sought to provide the courts with the clear authority to provide for damages where any court action is determined to be frivolous, vexatious, or made in bad faith.

Without creating a new barrier for rights holders to protect their copyright or trademark, this amendment would create a safeguard to ensure the integrity of the system and would protect small businesses from the possibility of a company abusing the provisions of Bill C-8 for anti-competitive purposes rather than for protecting their legitimate intellectual property. Although we again believed that these amendments would be deemed to be friendly by the government, we were mistaken. These two were defeated, and in our view, it was an important missed opportunity to make the bill stronger.

The last NDP amendment I want to highlight here was our effort to create a tool for assessing whether the bill would actually be effective in combatting counterfeit products, as the bill's title would have us believe it would be. When my NDP colleagues and I asked in committee whether it was possible to ascertain the extent of the problem of counterfeit goods coming into our country, the answer was a resounding no. At best, we know the value of the seizures that were made. As the RCMP told us, the retail value of counterfeit goods they seized increased from \$7.6 million in 2005 to \$38 million in 2012. However, that does not account for any of the goods that were not detected as they crossed our borders.

That is a significant concern, especially since, as I said earlier, the government has cut the ability of Canada Border Services to do its job by slashing the agency's budget by \$143 million. That cut has seriously harmed our ability to monitor our borders.

We know that the problem is bigger than the numbers reflected in the RCMP's seizure stats, but accurately measuring the scale of counterfeit copies and goods in Canada remains difficult. This is owing to the clandestine nature of counterfeiting. In addition to the actual seizures, much of the data are estimates based on anecdotal information or are from industry itself, in which case, the collection methods may be unavailable to assess.

● (1025)

What we do know is that counterfeit products can pose risks to the health and safety of consumers, whether we are talking about counterfeit electrical components, faulty brake pads, or unsanitary stuffing in goose down jackets.

Government Orders

According to the Chamber of Commerce's Canadian Intellectual Property Council, counterfeit batteries have exploded in the desks of police who have stored them, and the acid leaking from counterfeit batteries has caused burns to at least eight Canadian children. It is precisely for those types of safety reasons that it is essential that we know the scope of the problem. How else can we know whether we are assigning the appropriate resources to dealing with the problem of counterfeiting?

When I raised this issue with the Minister of Industry in committee, he acknowledged that there are no more accurate estimates out there. When we asked the RCMP whether it had numbers, just with respect to the number of Canadian manufacturers who have been convicted of importing or exporting counterfeit goods, we were told that it had no figures for that either. Therefore, it seemed to us that the bill could create an important opportunity to require accurate information to be both collected and reported so that Parliament, and more importantly Canadians, would have a better way of evaluating whether we were being successful in addressing the concerns at the heart of this bill. In fact, we were simply echoing the recommendation of the industry committee in 2007, which called on the government to establish a reporting system that would track investigations, charges, and seizures for infringing copies and counterfeit goods as a means of collecting some data.

Our proposed amendment had the support of the Canadian Association of Importers and Exporters. Joy Nott, the president and CEO of the organization, responded to a question from me by saying:

Do I support the monitoring of this sort of thing? Absolutely I do. I think that's a great idea because, from a business perspective, business lives on metrics and on data. This is how they help to make decisions. Right now when it comes to copyright infringement, trademark infringement, and the ability to import into Canada, it's a little bit like the wild west in that there's nothing that stops these shipments at the border currently unless the owner of the trademark takes specific, very onerous action through Canadian federal courts to register something.

Since there seemed to be agreement that a reporting requirement would be an important improvement to Bill C-8, we moved an amendment to require an annual report to Parliament with information on detentions made under the bill. We had hoped for information on the number of detentions, the number of requests for assistance under both the Copyright Act and the Trade-marks Act, and the number of inspections conducted. Sadly, the government members voted to defeat this amendment, and once again confirmed for me that this government has complete disdain for evidence-based decision making.

Despite the fact that our amendments were defeated, we continue to be supportive of the bill as a whole. In this case, at least it is a start. Dealing with counterfeiting and infringement is important for both Canadian businesses and consumers. Members can rest assured that with or without a report back to Parliament, we will not stop holding the government to account on this important file. Without adequate resources for enforcement, C-8 will prove to be a paper tiger. That cannot be allowed to happen, especially when the health and safety of Canadians may very well be at risk.

● (1030)

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her very in-depth speech. It seems to me that we are flying blind on this. My colleague mentioned the fact that

there have been a certain number of seizures. However, is there any evidence as to what percentage of the total counterfeiting issue these seizures represent? Is it 10%, 50%, or 30%? I would like to ask my hon. colleague that question.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, that is a very good question. The statistic we have is that a quarter of RCMP investigations and seizures of counterfeit products were potentially harmful to consumers in 2011, and that proportion has gone up from 11% in 2005. Both of those were a response to an order paper question that my colleague from Sudbury placed on the order paper. That was the only way we were getting the information from the government.

The question we still have, as I indicated in my speech, is this: when is the government going to focus its efforts, in the area of counterfeiting, on the health, safety, and security of consumers?

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest. We saw the main problem with ACTA, and certainly the backlash in Europe. It was the attempt to blur the line between criminal counterfeiting, which we need to go after, and going after individuals who may infringe copyright but are certainly not criminal actors.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague about the Liberals' attempt to amend the law so that they could stop people travelling internationally and go after them for personal use. This seems to be way beyond what ACTA envisioned and way beyond what anyone else has brought forward. With statutory damages of \$100,000 and limiting judges, it seems to me that we are talking about criminalizing a whole class of consumers as opposed to focusing on the real criminal element.

I would like to ask my colleague why she thinks the Liberals came forward with such an extreme position.

● (1035)

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, trying to get into the heads of my Liberal colleagues is a very daunting proposition. I am not really prepared to do that.

I do know that when we were at committee my colleagues on our side of the committee room were quite surprised at the Liberals' approach. Every bit of expert testimony we had suggested that their proposed amendment would be a huge infringement on civil liberties. We found ourselves in the very strange position as New Democrats of voting with the Conservatives in maintaining the balance. It is indeed a very crucial balance that we tried to achieve in the bill between consumer rights and still being able to go after counterfeit goods.

I very much appreciate the question. I do not have an answer. I have no idea why the Liberals wanted to infringe civil liberties through the implementation of Bill C-8. It certainly made no sense to us.

Government Orders

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to emphasize one of the things the Liberal Party has spoken at great lengths about. That is the importance of ensuring the safety and health of our children, in particular, as well as seniors and others. There are many benefits within the legislation that would in fact enable safer importation of pharmaceutical medications, for example. There are many fraudulent games and toys that are brought into the country that have all sorts of potential chemicals put into the paints, and so forth, which are all quite dangerous to our population, our children in particular.

I wonder if the member might want to provide some comment, if the NDP were successful at bringing any amendments, to deal with those two specific issues, pharmaceuticals and children's toys. I use those as examples.

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, indeed we were. As I suggested during my speech, particularly with respect to the definition of "distinctive", as it was rewritten in the bill, it was imperative that we return to the original so that it would be possible for people to have confidence in generic drugs and that we were not inadvertently affecting people's health and safety by making a change in the bill for which there was no demonstrable reason.

One of the things that was really fascinating to me during the committee's deliberations on the bill was the magnitude of counterfeit goods that have been coming into the country. We learned, for example, that many of the counterfeit Canada Goose goose-down jackets have chicken feces and chicken beaks instead of just down in the coats. We heard of batteries exploding and the deaths of police officers. I did not know that when one buys a Team Canada hockey jersey, the way to know whether it is a fake or it is real is to check to see if it was made in Canada. If the jersey was made in Canada, it is actually a fake.

There are all kinds of consumer issues that we need to address in a very serious way, and frankly, we need to do much more consumer education as well so that we can detect, as consumers, which goods are officially licensed and which ones are counterfeit.

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my distinguished colleague for having so ably defended Bill C-8.

Clearly, the NDP always sides with Canadian consumers. The best example of that is when it comes to medication. The government waited three years to take medication with major defects off the market. That is a mistake that an honest and experienced leader, such as the Leader of the Opposition, would never have made. He would not have waited three years, I can tell you that.

Like all our policies, Bill C-8 is very much in line with our support for the minimum wage, our insistence that the health care cuts be reversed and our call for an inquiry into missing aboriginal women. In other words, with Bill C-8, is the NDP not demonstrating that it wants the government to work for Canadians, first and foremost?

[English]

Ms. Chris Charlton: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for the question. On raising the integrity of medicines and the health

and safety of Canadians with respect to the medications that they take, he is, of course, spot on.

I think the member was referring to matters that we raised in question period here on this side of the House with respect to Apotex and the fact that the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health effectively said that they raised the issue of unsafe drugs with the company but the company refused to act, as if that somehow were good enough for Canadians. Clearly, it was not.

Now, in Bill C-8, we have that issue before us again. We moved amendments in committee to make sure, as I said, that consumers would still be able to take generic drugs with the confidence that they were taking the right medication. We are now able to have generic drugs with the same shape, colour and size as the original medications precisely so that consumers can have confidence in the system. That is absolutely imperative.

The other question we have to ask ourselves is this. If we are creating this framework to keep Canadians safe, why are we cutting the resources for both the RCMP and Canadian border officials, which would make it impossible to enforce that regime?

Those resources have been cut dramatically. Over 500 full-time jobs will be gone. How can Canadians have confidence that, even with this new regime, the necessary enforcement will be there to keep them and their families safe?

● (1040)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Before we resume debate, I would inform the House that we are now almost to the five-hour point in the debate, so this will be the last 20-minute speaking slot.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Surrey North.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Hamilton Mountain made a very passionate and eloquent speech on this particular bill, and I would like to thank her for providing that very useful information to the House.

I rise today on behalf of my constituents in Surrey North to speak to Bill C-8, the combating counterfeit products act. The title of the bill requires that we all agree to issues like this in the House. It is very rare that all parties agree on certain issues in the House and move forward an agenda that is in the best interests of Canadians.

It is a pleasure to speak to the bill today to support a piece of legislation on which all parties are in general agreement. Often in the House, it seems impossible to move forward and create meaningful legislation that all parties can agree on. Of course, no piece of legislation will ever be perfect to every party, but when we have the opportunity to advance the legislative agenda in this country and create legislation surrounding important issues, I gladly welcome the progress.

As members of the official opposition, it is our duty to ensure that legislation is carefully considered and questioned, and that dissenting opinions are publicly expressed and debated. However, as embodied by our late leader, Jack Layton, there is also great value in working together. I believe that the bill will be a step forward for all Canadians.

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Issues surrounding counterfeiting, copyright and trademark infringement, and intellectual property are, without a doubt, complex matters that may seem far removed from the lives of normal Canadians. However, in reality, these issues have a direct impact on all Canadians, especially with regard to their health and safety. I truly believe that as elected officials, we should work to make this country as safe as possible for all citizens. Counterfeit goods have the potential to put the health and safety of Canadians at risk, and as such, it is time that we strengthened our laws against counterfeit goods.

Dealing with counterfeiting and infringement is important in protecting Canadian consumers who may unsuspectingly purchase counterfeit goods that could put their health and safety at risk. As the member for Hamilton Mountain pointed out, there is a lack of awareness with regard to counterfeit goods across the country, with many consumers not knowing whether a particular product is counterfeit or not. Certainly, more education and information for consumers would be another step that we could take to inform consumers, but that is another issue.

The talk of counterfeit products intuitively brings to mind images of the knock-off designer handbags, sunglasses and watches that we frequently see. I am sure that it is hard to imagine how these products might pose a risk to the health and safety of Canadians. These types of products breed different problems in that they undermine the value of the original product and capitalize on the creativity of another company by infringing on its intellectual property. By dealing with counterfeiting and infringement, as we are attempting to do with the bill, we will hopefully also cut down on counterfeit products of this nature, which are serious infringements on rights holders.

What concerns me most are the products that pose a health and safety risk to Canadians. While researching the bill, I read about counterfeit batteries that exploded in the desks of police officers who had stored them there. I also learned that acid leaking from counterfeit batteries has caused burns to at least eight Canadian children.

I am a parent myself. My young son is eight years old and he has a number of electronic gadgets that he plays with. It is not just my son who plays with these toys, as his friends from around the neighbourhood play with them, too. The batteries often run out and he comes to me or his mom and asks for new batteries for those gadgets. It scares me to think there are counterfeit batteries out there that my son or another child could be exposed to, which could be hazardous to their health. As a parent, I am concerned. We need to take steps to ensure that these counterfeit products are not on the market.

● (1045)

It is terrifying to hear that these types of goods are in our society and our kids could be using them. It scares me to think that Canadians have to fear that the batteries their children use in their remotes for their video games or TVs might injure them. This is merely one example of an ordinary household product that we unassumingly utilize in our everyday lives. We hardly expect something like this to harm us.

I will give the House one more example of counterfeiting that poses a serious health and safety risk. Just a few days ago a man from Surrey was sentenced to six months in prison in the United States for selling counterfeit vehicle airbags. All Canadians would be seriously concerned if they found they had counterfeit airbags in their cars that might not deploy properly. This is a safety device that we often take for granted. On the rare occasion that they would be used, we assume they would protect us. The consequences of counterfeit products like this not working are serious. Serious injury or even death could result. This is a prime example of a safety risk stemming from a counterfeit product. We need to protect all Canadians from this type of counterfeiting.

The technical details of Bill C-8 would add two new criminal offences under the Copyright Act: the possession of and the exportation of infringing copies and selling or offering counterfeit goods on a commercial scale.

The bill proposes to create a prohibition against importing or exporting infringing copies and counterfeit goods and introduces a balance to the prohibition by creating two exemptions: for personal use and for items in transit control. I will speak to that aspect of the bill later in my speech.

Bill C-8 would also grant ex officio powers to border officials to detain infringing copies of counterfeit goods. This is a significant policy shift as until now border guards required the private rights holder to obtain a court order before seizing infringing copies of goods. This policy change would grant much greater power to front-line officers to prevent counterfeit goods from entering the country.

Additionally, Bill C-8 would grant new ex officio powers to the Minister of Public Safety and border officials to share information on detailed goods with the rights holder.

I have another serious concern with Bill C-8 in regard to how the provisions of this legislation would be implemented.

Over the last four years, I have seen the government bring in legislation which could basically be considered a paper tiger. Legislation needs to have teeth. There also has to be the necessary resources to implement legislation that the government brings into the House. That is the case with this legislation as well.

This legislation would help Canadians look after their health, but no resources have been allocated as to how the legislation would be implemented or how CBSA would implement some of the provisions in the bill. It is extremely unclear how CBSA would implement enforcement measures introduced in Bill C-8 in the face of the cuts from budget 2008.

● (1050)

Budget 2012 slashed \$143 million in funding to CBSA, which in turn reduced front-line officers and weakened our ability to monitor our borders. The New Democrats understand that CBSA needs to be adequately resourced in order to carry out this new work that we expect from it in a manner that does not take away from the other very important work it already performs.

This \$143 million in cuts to CBSA over three years will equate to a loss of 549 full-time equivalents between now and 2015, according to this year's CBSA Report on Plans and Priorities.

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The changes proposed by Bill C-8 will require that CBSA dedicate additional resources to areas such as intelligence analysis, port of entry examination and officer training. However, to accomplish the goals set out in the bill without additional funds, CBSA will have to re-allocate internal sources. This puts at risk many of the other extremely important work that CBSA perform.

If we look at some of the other bills the government brought in, on one hand, it brings in some legislation that will be tough on crime. On the other hand, it cuts funding to preventive programs that require either monitoring of individuals or reintegration of some of the people who will be out of jail. The government is creating these paper tigers, while at the same time it is not only cutting the very people who will be enforcing the legislation, but it is also cutting some of the remedial funding that is needed to ensure these kinds of laws and regulations actually work in real life.

It is very discouraging that we are trying to protect the health of safety of Canadians, of balancing that with the copyrights, while at the same time cutting the funding for the very officers who would be monitoring all of this. That is very troubling.

The men and women of the Canada Border Service Agency have the extremely important job of defending our borders in every respect, and they put their lives on the line every day to ensure our borders and our citizens are safe. The New Democrats believe that CBSA needs to be adequately funded in order to carry out the provisions of the bill effectively so it can continue to do its job without compromising its other important responsibilities in protecting our borders and our citizens. I hope the government will take steps to ensure CBSA has the resources needed to perform the duties that are being asked of it under Bill C-8.

As I mentioned earlier, I want to speak to the exceptions that are included in the bill, including the exception for personal use and for items in transit control. The personal use exemption means that border officials would not be permitted to seize copies that would be in one's possession or baggage. The provision for items in transit is also important in providing balance in the bill for items that may be destined for a location to which they are being imported lawfully. These are important exemptions to ensure that on the whole, this system is workable and cost effective.

As I mentioned earlier, budgetary restrictions on border officers already pose challenges to the implementation of the bill. These exemptions would ensure that Bill C-8 would not create longer border delays, increased searches of individual travellers as well as put an additional burden on CBSA officers.

•(1055)

I come from Surrey, which is only a 10 or 15-minute ride from the border, and I have already seen long lineups at the border going both ways. In the Lower Mainland of B.C., a lot of the jobs are created by tourism. As we know, one of the best places to live is British Columbia, in Surrey, Vancouver and greater Vancouver. There are a lot of visitors from the states and, likewise, Canadians go south of the border. Many times I have seen hours and hours of long lineups either to get into the United States or to come to Canada.

There should not be cuts to the very people who look after our borders. The cuts to CBSA over the last number of years, and cuts

that will happen in the next few years, have put extra burden on these individuals. I hope the government takes into consideration that cutting the very people who are patrolling our borders, CBSA officers and RCMP, is going to have an impact not only on the movement of people from one side to the other, but also goods, which would hurt the economy in which we operate. It also hurts jobs. Cutting the funding for these border services officers will impact not only how we implement this bill, but will have an impact on the movement of goods and services across the border.

The New Democrats believe that intellectual property requires an approach that strikes a balance between the interests of rights holders and the interests of users and consumers. These exceptions are important provisions that work to maintain this delicate balance.

I am glad to see the Conservative government put forward legislation that essentially all parties can agree on. That is an important step in protecting both businesses and consumers in Canada. Although I am not hopeful, I hope the government will take my comments about the need for more resources to be allocated to CBSA under advisement and work to ensure the bill is implemented effectively.

The member for Hamilton Mountain talked about the New Democrats introducing amendments that would improve the bill. I have seen in other committees where the government brings in legislation, many experts testify before committee and offer very thoughtful suggestions that could improve bills further to ensure they are workable, in the best interests of Canadians and close any sort of loopholes. As usual, time after time, whether it is this bill or other bills, the government has failed to take those suggestions into consideration.

Surely, after many thousands of suggestions, whether by the official opposition, the New Democrats, or experts from many different organizations across the country, the government would consider some of those suggestions to improve bills. Time after time, it has not accepted amendments offered by us.

I hope the governing party takes my advice with regard to providing more resources and implementing Bill C-8.

•(1100)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the opposition party mused about a Liberal position around trying to assume some individual responsibility in this situation. I would like to ask the member this question.

Does he not think that curbing demand by individuals is also a way of managing this issue? In particular, in the riding I represent, many artists, musicians and writers suffer from copyright infringement and the transmission of that copyright across borders. Does he not think that taking steps to somehow curb the market and the demand may also be a way of protecting income and copyrights for individual artists who are suffering because it is only a systemic approach, a corporate approach, to managing this situation?

Government Orders

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that excellent question, and I actually agree with him in regard to the Liberal position.

I am actually puzzled by a lot of the positions they take on a number of issues. I have seen this on the issue of Iraq. The leader of the Liberal Party has a statement one day and another statement on a different day. One day he is supporting the mission, which—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands is rising on a point of order.

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to my hon. friend from Surrey North, we have limited time to debate Bill C-8 in this place, and his response has gone slightly off topic unless there are Iraqi goods to which counterfeiting measures would apply.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The member raises the point of relevance. As all members know, members are given some latitude, and certainly making a short reference to another issue is acceptable. I am quite confident that the member for Surrey North will keep remarks relevant in general to the question.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, I only brought up that issue because the member asked about the Liberal Party.

To answer his question, any time an issue or bill that concerns health and safety risks to Canadians is brought to the House, we will certainly support those kinds of initiatives, whether they are by the government or by the opposition. That is why we are here: to act in the best interests of all Canadians.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the NDP will support Bill C-8. Of course we will, because this bill will protect Canadians. We are in favour of that, just as we are in favour of daycare and minimum wage. Voting for a good law is fine, but making sure it gets implemented is essential. This is becoming quite scandalous; an experienced leader like the Leader of the Opposition would never have done such a thing. In this particular case, what can we expect from the legislation when the people responsible for enforcing it have had some 500 positions cut? What can we expect from a bill that does not apply to generic prescription drugs? There are criteria governing the quality of patented drugs, but the government takes no responsibility for generic drugs. That is the problem. I would like an answer about that.

• (1105)

[*English*]

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, we have repeatedly seen legislation in this House, whether it is first nations legislation or other, that creates paper tigers but does not allocate funding to implement some of the provisions in those bills or some of the regulations that are going to be created. The result is that the responsibility to implement those measures is downloaded to the provinces, and I have seen the impact it has on them.

If we are creating these laws and regulations, there have to be resources behind them. As I indicated earlier, there have been cuts to the funding for CBSA officers to the tune of about \$143 million over three years. That is equivalent to about 549 full-time jobs.

If we are going to be creating these laws and regulations to protect Canadians, whether for health or safety reasons, then we owe it to

Canadians to ensure that adequate funding and resources are available.

I do not see that from the government, either with this legislation or with other legislation that has been brought in. It has failed to provide the resources.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest, and I was rather shocked to see the Liberal position on this issue. They would go further than the Conservatives, further than the secretive agreement did, because of their desire to go after individual consumers, and this after 35,000 lawsuits against kids, mothers, and even dead people in the U.S. over downloading a song or two.

My colleague from Trinity—Spadina seems to believe that what the Liberals attempted to do is a good economic driver. They wanted to make it possible to stop people at airports, check out what they have on their iPods, find out if it was actually downloaded it from iTunes or if their kid sent it to them, and then be able to pull them out of line and charge them. Everyone recognizes that it would be an outrageous infringement of individual rights to no purpose. It would allow criminal counterfeiting gangs to carry on, but individuals would targeted.

I would like to ask my hon. colleague why the Liberal Party is so out of touch with what it means to support artists in this country and to support the right of individual consumers to travel across international borders without being stopped and harassed.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, I am actually very puzzled by the position of the Liberals on this particular bill and the kinds of amendments they wanted to bring in. I am puzzled, but I am not surprised.

The Liberals had the opportunity to bring in measures for these sorts of issues on health and safety risks and infringements on the Copyright Act when they were in government. However, they did not bring them in back then, and I do not expect them to provide any insightful amendments for the bill before us.

The member for Timmins—James Bay is absolutely correct when he talks about how Liberals have failed to protect artists in our community and the very culture that artists create in this country. Again, I am very puzzled as to how the Liberals responded to this particular issue. It is truly amazing.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague mentioned examples of dangerous counterfeit goods, such as the acid in batteries that go in children's toys and airbags that do not deploy. That is dangerous. He believes that this is a very important bill; he said so himself.

I would like him to tell us more about how the importation of those kinds of counterfeit goods into Canada affects the health and safety of Canadians, particularly given the budget cuts at the Canada Border Services Agency.

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[English]

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, as a parent I am very concerned about some of these counterfeit items. I talked about batteries exploding, and a number of Canadians have died from these sorts of products.

As a father of two children, I am very concerned, especially about batteries and such, because my son uses batteries in a number of different gadgets that he has.

The other case I pointed out was on the airbags that were being sold into the United States by an individual from my city. He has been jailed for six months in the United States. This is a very recent case. One would think that airbags would deploy and work properly when they are needed.

These are very serious health and safety issues for all Canadians. To detect these products and ensure that they do not come into the market, we need CBSA officers to inspect the goods that are coming in, so making cuts to the numbers of those officers is not going to help.

I encourage the government to provide the resources so that we can properly implement Bill C-8.

• (1110)

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a great honour to rise in the House and speak to Bill C-8 on counterfeiting measures.

I have spoken many times over the last 10 years on these issues. In terms of legislative issues, often the issues regarding copyright, counterfeit, and trademark have been blurred, and there is a need to come up with coherent policies that protect citizens and rights holders.

This is not an easy situation, because we are in a market that has transformed itself incredibly since Lord Macaulay, in 1841, talked about the need to protect the writers of the time. He said we have to stop “the knaves who take the bread out of the mouths of deserving men”. Lord Macaulay believed there needed to be copyright provisions, but he also said there had to be a balance, that it was not about creating a monopoly for a certain group of book holders in London to stop upstarts who wanted to come in.

We know the story of the reason Hollywood exists. It is because California at that time was beyond the copyright laws of the Thomas Edison corporation. They moved out to the desert, not because it was beautiful but because they were the original pirate culture. They set themselves up and created an industry. The issue of these balances throughout history is a difficult act.

We have seen WIPO and ACTA, the secretive anti-counterfeiting trade agreement that received great international backlash from ordinary citizens because it was blurring the roles between domestic copyright policies, citizens' rights policies, and the issue of counterfeit.

Where this comes in is that we need to ensure that we can protect our rights holders and citizens from the counterfeit goods and bootleg operations that are undermining our economy. We need to ensure that we have the tools to go up against them.

When we see large corporate rights holders say they want to spread that across the board, we end up with an overreach, as with my colleagues in the Liberal Party saying we should go after individuals when a kid downloads a song and sends it to three friends.

The United States attempted, through its Digital Millennium Copyright Act of the 1990s, to create a legalistic response to the issues the digital culture was creating. After 35,000 lawsuits against citizens, the market did not come back. What was missing from the market at that time was a coherent plan for the remuneration of artists, who were facing some very difficult and challenging conditions because of the ease of copying. It used to be the only people who could actually copy were the ones who had the means of production, the bookbinders and record companies, but suddenly ordinary citizens could make copies, so the right to make copies became very challenged.

Canada had come up with one of those solutions, which was the private copying levy. We recognized in Canada that people were going to make all manner of copies and that it would be impossible to remunerate artists for all the copying going on, so for every cassette that was produced, a few pennies were put aside into a fund for artists. The decision by the Conservative government to kill the private copying levy has cost the Canadian music industry \$25 million a year. Given the conditions of the music industry in Canada, that is \$25 million we cannot afford to lose.

Under the latest copyright act, the government killed the mechanical royalties for musicians and for the record industry, which is millions more. At a time when the artistic culture of our country is suffering very much, the need to remunerate those artists has been steadily whacked away. There is the issue of collective copying regimes in schools. It certainly needs to be updated because of the digital culture, but to simply undermine it would leave artists working for free and would make the intellectual and artistic development of our country much more challenged.

The other issue we are seeing now is the copyright board's rules on live streaming. In the United States, it is an abysmal situation. As an example, Lady Gaga was paid \$162 in royalties for over a million plays. I think that was through Spotify, the streaming service.

• (1115)

For someone of the magnitude of Lady Gaga to receive a \$162 cheque shows you just how impossible it is for any other mid-size artist to make a living and run a business doing the kind of music that is Canada's premier export. We can talk about our oil and gas and mining, but the talent that has come out of Canada in terms of music, our artists, playwrights, internationally, this is an industry that we cannot afford to undermine anymore.

Government Orders

In the United States the streaming royalties set by its copyright tariffs are so low that it is undermining the ability of any artist to survive. The Copyright Board of Canada has set it at 10% of the American rate. Therefore, they are living as paupers in the United States with what their copyright board has set for this new medium and in Canada it is only 10% of what the rate is in the United States. We would assume then if Lady Gaga had one million plays in Canada, she would get \$16.50, which would make anyone decide to go and work at Tim Hortons rather than be an artist in this country.

Those are the issues we are facing in terms of the need to protect our artists. How do we protect our artists? We do not criminalize the consumer. We create a monetary stream. That is a reasonable solution. In terms of counterfeiting we have to separate the issues around protecting our artists and giving them the tools they need to be able to prosper, from the issues around being able to go after the counterfeit gangs.

I will stay on the artists' situation for one more minute. Where we have small businesses or small creative artists, if their trademarks or arts are taken by some counterfeit gang in China and reproduced, they have no mechanisms to go after them. Individual and small rights holders have no ability to go after these counterfeit operations. Sony and Warner Bros. can, but the individual creative rights holders who has their work stolen has no ability. If we are looking at international trade agreements, how do we provide provisions so that the small creative artists who are having their works stolen can respond?

The bill is really an attempt to bring Canada in line with what came out of the ACTA negotiations, which were secretive. It was an overreach. It was a process too beset by lobbyists to be credible and when it came to the public, there was a huge backlash. It was interesting to see that the backlash was in Europe. Therefore, we see some of these provisions have been modified somewhat.

Now the border guards are able to seize counterfeit goods at the border. That is a good provision because rights holders actually had to go to court and get a court order before, so it was very difficult. Giving border guards the ability to seize goods at the border is a reasonable solution to dealing with criminal counterfeiters. Counterfeit operations undermine our economy and they also undermine basic health and security in this country.

Again, I want to point out that our Liberal colleagues wanted to extend this to be able to go after individuals who are travelling, which would have made it the ultimate harassment tool for anyone travelling anywhere internationally. You could be pulled out of a line and told that officials wanted to look at your iPod and go through every one of your songs. My kids send me songs that they have downloaded, maybe from iTunes, but I would be liable for that. That would be an overreach, so the Liberal position of going after individuals and criminalizing individuals when the focus of our border guards should be going after the criminal gangs is very wrong-headed and out of step with pretty much the rest of the world, although maybe North Korea might side with them on that one.

If we are going to have counterfeit laws we need the resources so that border guards can go after counterfeiters. We have seen massive cuts in border services. We also need resources for the police because they still do not often see that this is an issue, going after the

knock-off goods, going after the bootlegged DVDs. Perhaps we need to look at provisions that provide our police services with the incentive to clean up some of the illegal trades in goods that have undermined our economy and undermined safety for Canadians.

• (1120)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Before I go to questions and comments, I would just remind hon. members to address their questions and comments to the Chair. A couple of times this morning in the questions, members used the structure of "Mr. Speaker, through you to the member, why did you do this or why did you say that?" Members cannot do indirectly what they cannot do directly.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Jeanne-Le Ber.

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Timmins—James Bay for his very eloquent understanding of the situation. We did work together on the committee for Bill C-11 to reform copyright.

I would ask the member if he could comment further on these issues. He was speaking about the issues regarding artists and the limitations now placed on the remuneration for artists because of the changes to the mechanical rights regime, the copyright regime and the private copying regime. He spoke about how that differs, for example, from the more tangible counterfeiting of DVDs, Prada bags, or things that can be seized at the border.

Could the member comment a little bit about how he sees it being more difficult, if he does, in finding remuneration for artists under this copyright regime, as opposed to simply seizing goods at the border?

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, in 1928, the recording industry in the United States collapsed. It was the biggest single loss in the history of the recording industry. It happened because the radio came in. Why buy records when people could listen to the radio?

The industry was in deep crisis until it found a solution where it forced the radio stations to pay a share. Part of the reason that people were listening to the radio was because they were listening to music. That remuneration stream then brought in an unprecedented artistic development of artists across North America and Europe because they were able to be paid.

What we are seeing now in this changing culture is that artists have incredible new opportunities for getting their product out there, but they do not have any way to get paid. It is decimating our artists at a time when they have incredible international opportunities.

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The issue is needing a balance. We have to find a remuneration monetization stream for our artists, but our legal issues need to be focused on going after the counterfeiters and bootleggers who are undermining the overall economy with commercial operations that use products and sell them, making money off of the backs of other people's work.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague is clearly very knowledgeable about the subject. That is why I would like him to contrast the New Democrats' approach to the Liberals' and Conservatives', especially with respect to striking a balance between the rights of consumers and those of artists.

[*English*]

Mr. Charlie Angus: Mr. Speaker, when my colleagues and I were working on the Copyright Act, one of the issues was that the only thing brought forward by the Conservatives was digital locks. Digital locks will not create a market. Digital locks will not stop theft. Any kid who wakes up in the morning probably breaks three digital locks.

What we said was, rather than simply saying that we would put in all kinds of legal provisions for digital locks, let us find a monetization formula. It does exist. This is not rocket science. It has been done before. It is possible.

The focus for the New Democrats is to say that our artists have a right to be paid and a right to be protected. We are not going to go the route of the Liberals, which was to criminalize consumers, because young people share. Sometimes they share movies, whether it is right or wrong, and we could debate that all day. Going after families and taking them to court for millions and millions of dollars, which we saw happening in the United States, is a wrong-headed move. In the States, it undermined the market and kids just walked away from it.

How do we establish that balance? It is not by criminalizing consumers but by finding the monetary stream to protect our artists.

• (1125)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising today to speak to Bill C-8, An Act to amend the Copyright Act and the Trade-marks Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

Today, I want to express my support for this bill. It is difficult to disagree with the principle. Clearly, combatting counterfeiting is important for Canadian businesses and consumers. I will certainly not speak out against virtue.

However, I would like to express a few reservations that I have, particularly with regard to this government's true commitment to protecting copyright in Canada and the enforceability of the bill. I hope that the government will listen to what I have to say and that my comments will help to improve the measures that will be taken if this bill is passed.

I think that everyone here can agree that we have to crack down on counterfeiting, both because of the negative impact that counterfeit goods can have on our economy and the economies of

our neighbours and because of the danger they can pose to Canadians' health.

The clandestine nature of counterfeiting prevents us from being able to accurately determine the scope of the problem for our economy. According to the RCMP, in 2011, 80% of counterfeit goods came from China, a 46% increase as compared to 2005.

According to Industry Canada, counterfeiting has increased in recent years:

The retail value of counterfeit goods seized by the RCMP increased from \$7.6 million in 2005 to \$38 million in 2012.

Of course, that is only counting the goods that were seized.

In 2009, in a report entitled "Magnitude of Counterfeiting and Piracy of Tangible Products: An Update", the OECD estimated the value of counterfeit and pirated goods in international trade at \$250 billion. These numbers speak for themselves. There is an urgent need for effective measures to combat this growing phenomenon.

The Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology recently conducted a study on intellectual property. Many businesses testified in support of taking action at the border to fight the increase in illegal counterfeit goods.

In its 2013 report entitled "Intellectual Property Regime in Canada", the committee made a number of recommendations regarding action to be taken at the border to prevent the import of counterfeit goods.

Similarly, in a dissenting opinion, the NDP members of the committee argued that the Canada Border Services Agency should be given sufficient funding to combat counterfeiting without compromising the other important responsibilities it has in protecting Canadians and defending our border.

Of course, because this was an NDP recommendation and would require an increase in government spending, even though this measure would protect the Canadian economy, the NDP was forced to submit it in a written dissenting opinion, because the Conservatives are too blinded by their ideology to see the benefits of such a measure for our industries. It makes no sense, but this is not the first time something like this has happened, and it probably will not be the last.

This government is full of contradictions. Only now has it come forward with Bill C-8, a nice collection of good intentions, although for years now, our American neighbours have been calling on Canada to bring in tougher measures against counterfeit products.

In its 2012 Special 301 Report, the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative made a statement regarding the Americans' position.

• (1130)

[*English*]

It said, in part, that the United States "continues to urge Canada to strengthen its border enforcement efforts, including by providing customs officials with ex officio authority to take action against the importation, exportation, and transshipment of pirated or counterfeit goods."

Government Orders

[*Translation*]

This bill adds two new criminal offences under the Copyright Act for the possession or export of infringing copies and creates a prohibition against importing or exporting infringing copies and counterfeit goods.

Those are great principles. This could help fight counterfeiting, thereby protecting copyright, and help prevent counterfeit goods from entering the Canadian market—which hurts our economy—or passing through our borders and entering the U.S. The problem is that this will take more than just words.

I actually have to wonder how this government can possibly claim to be serious about fighting counterfeit goods when in their 2012 budget, the Conservatives announced cuts totalling \$143 million over three years to CBSA funding. Some \$31.3 million was cut in 2012-13 and \$72.3 million in 2013-14, for a total of \$143.4 million that will be cut from the CBSA budget by 2014-15.

It is not hard to see that these very cuts will reduce the number of front-line officers and impair our ability to monitor our borders.

What is more, this year's report on plans and priorities indicates a loss of 549 full-time equivalent jobs by 2015 at the Canada Border Services Agency. This will reduce the agency's ability to discharge its responsibilities.

In other words, the government is speaking out of both sides of its mouth yet again. On one hand it says it wants to fight fraud, which is a good thing, but on the other hand it makes cuts that will prevent our border services from doing their job.

This bill gives even more responsibilities to CBSA just as the government keeps reducing the agency's ability to discharge them. Is that really what the government is proposing? I fail to see the logic in that.

Jean-Pierre Fortin, national president of the Customs and Immigration Union, commented on the 2012 budget cuts to the Canada Border Services Agency and how they would reduce border officers' ability to do their work:

These proposed budget cuts would have a direct and real impact on Canadians and our communities across the country: more child pornography entering the country, more weapons and illegal drugs will pass through our borders, not to mention terrorists, sexual predators and hardened criminals.

That is frightening.

In 2012, the union president was already saying that the agency would have a hard time protecting our territory. I wonder where the government thinks the necessary resources will come from for combatting the import of counterfeit goods, protecting Canadian industries, their transit from Canada to the United States, or for protecting Canadians from counterfeit products that might be dangerous for their health and safety, when it keeps cutting the agency's budget.

To effectively combat the entry into Canada of counterfeit goods, we need a lot more than words and good intentions. We need the means.

The NDP supports the measures that would help Canadian businesses keep jobs and production here, instead of transferring them to countries that have stricter copyright protections.

The NDP also wants to ensure that enough funds will be available so that laws like the one proposed in Bill C-8 can realistically be enforced, and so that the agencies responsible for enforcing them do not have to make choices that could compromise their other responsibilities, thus jeopardizing the safety of Canadians.

In this case, if the government is truly serious about wanting to crack down on counterfeit products coming into our country, it will have to give Canada Border Services the means to fulfill all of its responsibilities. The government will have to revise its decision to decrease the agency's budget and reverse the trend of reducing the number of front-line officers.

As I mentioned at the beginning of my speech, the New Democrats support the underlying principles of the bill and will vote in favour of the bill. We just want to ensure that this is not in vain.

• (1135)

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Hochelaga for her very relevant and informed speech.

What would she suggest we tell Canadians in the big cities, most of whom are well aware that a \$20 Rolex is very likely not real and that a \$25 Coco Chanel purse is a knock-off?

The sale of counterfeit products tends to be trivialized, especially in Quebec, where all kinds of counterfeit products can be found at flea markets. How can we inform Canadians that this is a real problem? How do we explain this to the average Canadian watching us today?

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question. We need to start by showing Canadians that, of course, counterfeit items may include handbags, but may also include things that harm not only people's health and safety, but also the Canadian economy.

For example, some bicycles are manufactured in Canada. However, the manufacture of bicycles or furniture generally goes to China. Canada is losing industries because of counterfeiting. I am not necessarily saying that counterfeit bicycles are arriving from China, but that this is an example of the Canadian industry losing to other countries. The same is happening with products counterfeited here since Canadian industries are being prevented from producing good products, which is also harming the reputation of good Canadian industries.

If we want to keep good jobs in Canada, we need to explain to Canadians that buying counterfeit products means that they are harming the Canadian industry and economy.

Government Orders

[English]

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to be able to speak on Bill C-8, which is a bill that deals with quite sweeping changes to copyright infringement and intellectual property rights in Canada.

I presented numerous amendments to the bill before committee, and I am sorry to say that, shockingly, my amendments did not carry. I am afraid that this has become the custom due to the passage of, astonishingly, identical motions in 20 different committees at the same time, intended to deprive me of my rights to present substantive amendments at report stage. Since I have been going to many committees under this new edict, I have not had a single amendment carry at committee. However, I remain hopeful that one day the reasoned efforts I am making will meet with favour.

In the case of Bill C-8, as I mentioned, we would be making sweeping changes, perhaps the most sweeping changes in intellectual property rights law in Canada in over 70 years. We would make these changes without adequate hearings, study, or the proof of any need.

As a matter of fact, one prominent member of the Canadian bar, Howard Knopf, describes the effort to deal with counterfeiting and fake products with this headline: “Is Parliament Rushing to Respond to a Fake Crisis About Fake Products?”

So, we have copyright infringement and we want to protect, and I completely agree with all members of the House who have spoken to our desire to protect artists, innovators, and creators from having the products of their intellectual efforts pirated and stolen without adequate response. However, I will share with this House quite simply what we fear is happening here: we would create multiple offences for relatively minor matters, criminalize things that would normally be dealt with in civil efforts, and we would create new charges under the Criminal Code for offences for which we already have adequate measures within the Criminal Code to handle such infringements.

I want to first begin with the question of invasion of privacy, which is found at clause 59 of Bill C-8.

The definition of “offence” under the Criminal Code section dealing with wiretapping would be amended to include infringements found and created in Bill C-8. It is important to note that this section is not before us at the moment because when we are amending one legislation and creating Bill C-8, we do not always go back and look at the legislation we are changing. However, I think it is important for all members in this place to look at the Criminal Code section that Bill C-8 would amend.

Bill C-8, intended to deal with copyright and trademark, would amend section 183 of the Criminal Code. If we look at section 183, we find that the definitions of “offence” deal with the following: first is high treason; second is intimidating Parliament or a legislature; third is sabotage; then is forgery, sedition, highjacking, endangering the safety of aircraft, offensive weapons, breach of duty, using explosives.

This category of offences, I think all members of this House would agree—even those who do not have statutory interpretation training—are offences of a high order and significant, dangerous

activities in the Criminal Code for which we want to be able to have access to wiretap. However, we would now add offences under copyright and trademark infringement, as created by this proposed act. Now, that is a step too far for the Green Party.

It means that, immediately upon passage of Bill C-8, we would see the day that people who, for instance, in a number of fact settings that we certainly do not contemplate as dangerous, could have their phones wiretapped. There is accidental downloading, as the hon. member for Timmins—James Bay mentioned, and most high school kids could break this proposed law any day of the week without planning to make a fortune for themselves or do anything other than download illegally from a website.

● (1140)

A noted lawyer in this area, Howard Knopf, was not a witness and was not allowed to speak before the committee. However, he mentioned that “The DNA and fingerprints of the movie and record industries are all over this bill”. Why else would we want to allow the RCMP and law enforcement agents to have the ability to wiretap the phones of people they suspect have downloaded illegally?

Copyright infringement in this new scenario, the brave new world of Bill C-8, goes quite far into activities that one would not ordinarily consider dangerous at all, not even criminal, but they will be criminalized. For instance, under some sections of the bill, it would not be hard to imagine that someone had infringed copyright under the bill by playing at a private function, such as a wedding, tunes that normally would be played by disc jockeys at various events. That could prompt a wiretap if they were so inclined.

These changes are quite sweeping. I do not believe the Canadian public is aware of what Bill C-8 proposes to do or the complexities and confusion that would be created by the way this legislation is structured.

Under Bill C-8, if criminal remedy is available for anyone who knowingly distributes copies of a work in which copyrights exist, that could capture a kid downloading or using files on BitTorrent. We do not want to encourage those activities, but on the other hand, the level of criminality and the ability to wiretap for those offences is certainly extreme.

The trademark and copyright area is a difficult area. People who work in this area are concerned that the bill could also inadvertently capture parallel imports. Parallel imports are also referred to as grey products. They are in a murky area. A parallel import is not actually infringement of copyright at all. It is not a counterfeit or a piracy measure. I will use an example from New Zealand that I found when I was looking for a commonplace example to explain what I mean by parallel imports.

In New Zealand it is common for luxury car dealers to go to Malaysia, buy a Mercedes Benz, which is cheaper there, then import that vehicle legally into New Zealand and sell it at the price Mercedes Benz wants to sell that car for in the New Zealand market. People who go to the trouble of getting the car in Malaysia have not broken any law and they make a fair bit of money on this.

Government Orders

It is generally considered that parallel imports increase consumer choice, aid competition and keep prices low. The way the bill is structured, it could quite easily capture parallel imports inadvertently, not counterfeit nor pirate imports. Not only do we capture parallel imports, we could then have the ability to wiretap to find out what that group is doing.

This legislation has a lot wrong with it. The failure to make any effort to make it more precise is astonishing when one considers that these fundamental changes to our copyright law are being pushed through without adequate time to consider the implications.

My colleague from Hamilton made an interesting point. How could a border guard be expected to have sufficient grasp of this complex area of international copyright law to distinguish between a parallel import and a counterfeit or pirated good? It is simply beyond the scope of even people who practise this area of law full-time to make such a determination on the spot at the border.

I will turn quickly to the recommendations that Howard Knopf would have made had he been allowed to speak at committee. I will quote from an article he wrote. The first recommendation was:

The numerous references apparently intended not to interfere with the free flow of parallel imports are inconsistent and present potentially serious drafting problems that require further study. The bill should propose appropriate declaratory language for both the Copyright Act and Trade-marks Act that makes is absolutely clear that, with the exception of the sui generis book importation scheme now found in s. 27.1 of the Copyright Act, neither of these acts shall in any restrict the importation, distribution or sale of any product...

The second recommendation was:

It would be mistaken and harmful to criminalize routine copyright and trade-mark infringement activity and there is no need to add additional criminal sanctions, much less wiretap enablement provisions or any provisions that would authorize the warrantless search of travelers to determine whether they have infringing items in their baggage...

The third recommendation was:

The bill should contain no provisions that are not essential for the purpose of combatting counterfeit...

I urge this place to accept that this legislation will require massive amendments very soon.

• (1145)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate what the leader of the Green Party put on the table, but when I listened to her remarks, it concerned me that a very important witness was not invited to the committee. Could she inform the House why that was the case?

I know committees have not worked well in recent years, but they are supposed to look at all the angles. It seems rather strange that consistently amendments from no one other than the government seem to be accepted. That is not how this place is supposed to work. Opposition members and other witnesses have good ideas, too. It might even prevent the government from having their legislation tossed back by the Supreme Court.

Could the member tell me the credentials of the witness and if she knows any reason why that person, with his expertise, was not invited to come to the committee to assist all Canadians in making better legislation?

Ms. Elizabeth May: Mr. Speaker, Howard Knopf has over 30 years' experience in copyright infringement law. He attached a CV and sent it to the committee. In his letter to the committee he said the following:

—if there is to be a bill - we need to get it right. Here is my offer to appear sent to the Committee on November 11, 2013. It seems that that the Committee does not wish to hear me on this.

He went on to say:

I would like to offer to appear before your Committee in my own personal pro bono capacity as a witness in order to address certain issues of serious concern regarding Bill C-8. While the overall purpose of the Bill is commendable, namely to reduce commercial counterfeiting and piracy, and the drafting shows very diligent work and great competence overall, the devil is in the details and there are 50 pages of highly technical details in this instance - some of which have profound policy implications.

He closed with a PS, which, in light of the comments from the member for Malpeque, are troubling. He wrote:

PS—Interestingly, the Committee has heard both from Lorne Lipkus and his son David Lipkus, both of the same anti-counterfeiting law firm, in separate presentations that were presumably both very much in favour of this legislation, and presumably both advocating for it to go even further... But, a Committee that is rushing to judgement and refusing to hear testimony that it might not like, while hearing separate testimony from a father and son in the same law firm with the same focus, is really rather unusual—even by Parliamentary Committee standards.

• (1150)

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.

An hon. member: 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.

An hon. member: Nay.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): In my opinion the yeas have it. I declare the motion carried.

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

* * *

ROUGE NATIONAL URBAN PARK ACT

The House resumed from June 19 consideration of the motion that Bill C-40, an act respecting the Rouge National Urban Park, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): When this matter was last before the House, the hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood had spoken for 10 minutes. Therefore, he has 10 minutes remaining, plus questions and comments.

The hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

Government Orders

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I suppose there is some possibility that since June 19 members do not remember what profound wisdom I shared with the chamber. On the realistic possibility that they have not retained that profound wisdom over the course of the summer, let me do a quick review and then comment on the changes that have happened since that debate, which have a dramatic impact on the integrity of the bill.

When I was initially expressing my thoughts, I was concerned about three things: the actual size of the park, the ecological integrity of the park, and the consistency of a park with agricultural leases. At that time, I was concerned about the ecological integrity of the park. Members may or may not know that most parks make reference to a clause when a park is created, which states:

The Minister shall, within five years after a park is established, prepare a management plan for the park containing a long-term ecological vision for the park [and set out] ecological integrity objectives and indicators...

That clause is noticeably missing from this park bill. Rather, there is a downgraded standard of ecological integrity, which states:

The Minister must, in the management of the Park, take into consideration the protection of its natural ecosystems and cultural landscapes and the maintenance of its native wildlife and of the health of those ecosystems.

It is quite a significantly reduced commitment.

As I said on June 19, taking into consideration that was not a plan, I then went on to sketch a scenario, which in a strange sort of way actually unfolded. The scenario was that the minister would go to the Province of Ontario and say that the federal government would like the 1,000 acres or 2,000 acres or whatever the number might be and the minister from the Province of Ontario would say that the province wanted to know how it would produce the plan and manage the park. The response from the minister of the environment, who is the responsible minister, would then say, "trust me", which does not cut it.

As far as anyone else in the House knows, including the parliamentary secretary to the minister, we do not know how this park would be managed.

I then went on to say that if I were the Province of Ontario, the town of Markham or the city of Toronto, I would be asking this rather fundamental question. I would say that unless they had a plan, no plan, no transfer. I want to emphasize that I hope it does not get held up on that. I hope there is a plan. I hope the ecological and cultural integrity of the park will be protected, however, "trust me" is not exactly a great answer.

I know the Speaker appreciates the profundity of my wisdom on these matters, but even I did not know that I would be prescient.

Members will note that since then, the Province of Ontario has withdrawn its 22 square kilometres because it wants a commitment to an ecological plan that is similar to or exceeds the commitment that currently exists for the park. The consequence of that is the government, for whatever reason, has not offered that commitment and is not presenting legislation which offers that commitment. Therefore, the Province of Ontario is in a bit of a dilemma because it wants to see this park succeed. The town of Markham, the city of Toronto and I dare say that pretty well everyone in this chamber want this park to succeed, as do all of the people who they represent.

•(1155)

The Province of Ontario has reluctantly withdrawn its commitment to transfer the 22-odd square kilometres that are within its jurisdiction. At this point, we do not actually know what other transferors will do to fulfill the government's commitment to a 58-square-kilometre park.

As we are speaking here on October 2, 2014, debating the bill, which we all support in one manner or another, we do not actually know what the park will be. In fact, we know much less than we knew back on June 19 when we were debating it.

At this point, this is a bit of a Swiss-cheese park, and I do not know what the Province of Ontario controls. I do know that it is significant. I would say it is pretty well one-third of the intended park. I do not know whether this turns it into a whole bunch of little pieces of land, which may or may not be joined together, through the entire 58 square kilometres. We may have a big chunk out of the middle of the park, or we may have a bunch of little chunks out of the park.

Regardless, this does not seem to be an appropriate way to go about it. I would have thought, and far be it from me to give advice to the government, that before tabling the plan, before tabling the bill, the government would have had the Province of Ontario, the City of Markham, and the City of Toronto, whichever would be transferring land, sign on to the commitment to ecological integrity, which was actually created in January 2013, when the federal government signed a memorandum of agreement with the Province of Ontario requiring that the Rouge Park policy meet or exceed existing provincial policy.

I would have thought that would have been locked down prior to the presentation of the bill, but it was not, and the Province of Ontario is not satisfied. The Province of Ontario will not transfer its land until it is satisfied, so we have a bit of a Swiss-cheese park proposal presently before the House. None of us actually knows what is in the proposal and the Government of Canada does not seem to be prepared to meet or exceed provincial policy.

The consequence is that we are debating in the dark, because we do not know where we are going to have this plan. We do not know what will be in it. We do not know what will not be in it. We do not know the basis of the government's refusal to meet or exceed the provincial standards, and the consequence of that is yet to be determined.

I frankly thought, when I read of the Government of Ontario's intention to withdraw from its commitment, that the government would actually pull the bill until such time as all levels of government were satisfied with the commitment to ecological integrity in the bill.

It is not as if this does not actually have some serious implications. This is an exciting possibility. This is a one-in-a-lifetime possibility, and it is very important to get it right. Therefore, it is very important to have all levels of government on side and to deal with what are unique problems in the proposal.

Government Orders

This park is crossed by Highway 401. It is crossed by Taunton Road. It is crossed by hydro lines. It is an urban park. Members might also know that the Rouge River is one of the more degraded watersheds in the general GTA. Because it is one of the more degraded watersheds, it is extremely important that an ecological management plan be put in place before the Conservatives invite other levels of government to simply turn over their commitment and in the end lose all control over their pieces of land.

• (1200)

I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for your time and attention. I cannot say that I would be overly insulted if you did not actually remember what I said in June this year. I hope that my remarks summarize what I see as the state of affairs and why this bill is quite problematic for many of us.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, first, I agree with my colleague that ecological integrity is one of the key pillars of Parks Canada. I believe in that quite strongly. We see that with many of the parks our government has created across this country. We have actually expanded park space quite significantly under the government.

What I am curious about is the November 15, 2015 date that has been set. There would be no talk, and my colleague can correct me if I am wrong, under any circumstance, for the transfer of that land. One could suggest that it has been coincidentally set. I would hope that is the case.

Would my colleague support an accelerated timeline for discussions around that should we be able to come to a consensus? Does he support that particular date for any specific reason? Could the member also comment on the fact that the whole principle of developing a parks management plan is to consult with the community, different stakeholders, and different levels of government to agree to the principles by which ecological integrity will be maintained in this park, which is typically the process by which parks are maintained in this country?

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, I do not know about a date. I believe that the member said November 2015. I do not know about that. I would have thought that a lot of the heavy lifting with respect to the plan and the park would have been done prior to the presentation of the bill. I guess that is where the rubber is hitting the road.

There are ongoing consultations with community stakeholders. I have been to one of them in my community. The consultation was literally across the creek from my own backyard. It was an interesting exercise. At the end of the two hours of consultation with my community, there may have been a lot more questions than there were answers. If this is the state of consultation, it does, in fact, make me a little nervous.

• (1205)

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciated my colleague's speech, in particular when he was talking about ecological integrity.

I am not an MP from Ontario, so I am interested in what he is hearing on the ground. He talked about the fact that the federal government is supposed to meet or exceed existing environmental

legislation. That is part of the land transfer agreement. Now the Ontario government is saying, as we heard, that it may not transfer the land.

It is a complicated thing to be debating in the House when we do not actually know what this park will look like. We are debating a bill about a park, and we do not know what the final result of the park will be.

I am wondering if the member can expand a little on this point and what he is hearing in his community and if he has any particular insight as to how we can even do this if we do not know if the lands will be transferred.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has hit the nail on the head. The presentation of this bill was entirely premature, given the recent factual circumstances, the facts on the ground, as folks like to describe it.

I know there are a number of people who have been Rouge Park warriors for 20 to 25 years. They are deeply committed to and involved in the management of the park and have been over the last few years. There is a sense, rightly, wrongly, fairly, et cetera, that they are marginalized. It is not an optimum way to treat citizens who have dealt with it.

Frankly, the Province of Ontario has picked up on the disquiet in the community, because this is a complicated park, no matter how one slices the baloney. It is going to be a very complicated park, even with the best of intentions, and even with a lot of the stakeholders on the side of the angels.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague, the member for Scarborough—Guildwood, for his presentation on the Rouge Park, as proposed to us.

I had a lot of involvement with the Rouge when I worked in the office of the Hon. Tom McMillan, when he was minister of the environment, and with the wonderful Pauline Browes, who continues to play an important role in this. She was minister of parks in the Mulroney administration.

I want to see the Rouge created as a national park, but I want it to be done right. I have also, therefore, worked with a group known as Friends of the Rouge Watershed for a very long time and share their concern that the current management plan and current plans for the park do not protect it adequately.

I want to ask my hon. colleague, the member for Scarborough—Guildwood a question. Yes, it is a park in an urban area, which makes it unique, but how much do we have to compromise on the fundamental principles of ecological integrity within the national park scheme in order to create an urban park? Should we not push for the very best ecologically protected zone we possibly can? This will be an achievement for the world.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, I, too, want to acknowledge the work of the Hon. Pauline Browes. Members might be interested to know that at one point, she ran against me, so I have some familiarity with Ms. Browes. Anyway, I am here, and she is not. The member for Whitchurch-Stouffville had the same experience, I believe, as well, but he is here.

Government Orders

I also want to acknowledge the work of Derek Lee, who was the member for Scarborough—Rouge River for many years. I think those are the two legislative heroes.

The hon. member asked a really interesting question: how much is the compromise going to be?

There is going to be compromise. We are not talking about pristine wilderness. We are not talking about Nahanni, which is what we will be talking about in the next park bill. We are talking about a significantly degraded watershed. We are talking about an area in the eastern GTA that is heavily populated, and we are talking about a lot of complications, particularly, for instance, with the leaseholders and how to integrate the leaseholders into the management of the farm yet meet the highest possible ecological standards, under the circumstances.

This is going to be difficult at the best of times, and it has been made even more difficult by these current circumstances.

• (1210)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be brief, given that I am short on time.

What concerns me is the dangerous precedent that the Conservatives could set by creating this park. Since it will be the first urban national park, it is essential that ecological integrity be the priority. My Conservative colleague just said that ecological integrity is important to her. Therefore, she should push her Conservative colleagues to make sure that this priority is in the bill, because it is not.

Does my colleague not believe that a dangerous precedent could be set by creating this park without making ecological integrity a priority?

[*English*]

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, I agree and I disagree, simultaneously, with my colleague. I think it is a dangerous precedent.

The creation of urban parks is difficult, and each one is unique to its own circumstances. However, I think this is the one where we make the mould, and if the mould is not one that has ecological integrity, or, in the words of some, has a net gain in ecosystem and watershed health as our standard, then we will achieve nothing. At this point, there is not one. That will result in some rather regrettable consequences.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will make a quick comment. I think the legislation in front of us should be supported by the members of the House, because it would, in fact, exceed provincial standards when it comes to ecological protection in our parks.

Provincial parks, such as Algonquin and Killarney, allow logging, mining, fishing, and hunting. The current legislation in front of us does not allow that. It will not allow for resource extraction, logging, the removal of native flora and fauna, hunting or fishing, or the removal of fossils.

I just make that comment because I think it is important to acknowledge that the legislation would exceed Ontario provincial legislation with respect to parks like Algonquin and Killarney, which are considered crown jewels in the Ontario parks system.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his work on this park. I imagine that if the hon. member were running this file, we could actually do some business.

However, “trust me” does not cut it. The responses from the federal government and the Government of Ontario have been unhelpful. This is a complicated park and, of course, there are other forms of commercial activity in other parks. That is the reality.

Unfortunately, the way that the legislation is phrased makes it open season. That is regrettable.

Frankly, “trust me” does not cut it.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by noting that today is the first day of the Markham Fair, which runs from October 2 to October 5. This is one of Ontario's largest agricultural fairs. It has been going on since 1844 in my community. It highlights the important role that farming and agriculture have played in the development of my community and the entire York region.

What is very special about the Markham Fair every year is the importance that the entire community places on it. Every November, I have the opportunity to attend the president's banquet at the Markham Fair, and we recognize the individuals who have volunteered their time at the fair. It always amazes me how many people have been there for 5, 10, 20, 25, 40, 45 and 50 years, volunteering at the Markham Fair. Generation upon generation of families volunteer to make this annual fair a special event for our entire community.

As I said, it is an agricultural fair. We see all the things that we could expect to see at an agricultural fair. There are ploughing matches. There are competitions for things like hogs, chickens, the best homemade apple pie. There is soap carving. Obviously, there is a midway and there are all kinds of other things that highlight the importance of agriculture to our community.

Today, as they kick off another year of the Markham Fair, I just wanted to congratulate them and wish them well.

There has been a lot of difference of opinion on the creation of the park. Actually, let me take that back. I do not think that there is a difference of opinion with respect to creating the Rouge national urban park. I think that the difference is in the form that the park would take.

As the members for Scarborough—Guildwood and Wellington—Halton Hills highlighted, a lot of people for many years have been focused on trying to create a national park in the Rouge. That is something that has been talked about for many years.

Government Orders

It is important to look back a little bit at where this all started and how we got to this place. A lot of the land in this area became available to the government through the expropriations in 1972 by the Trudeau government of, I think, over 18,000 acres of land for the creation of potential new airports and a second airport for Toronto. At that time, farmers in the area were evicted from their lands. Some were given leases to lease back their lands on a yearly basis, but many were evicted. That has been the reality for many of the farmers in the area since 1972.

Fast forward to 1994, when the Rouge park concept started being put into play. As it has already been noted, it really followed Pauline Browes, who was the minister of state for the environment in the Campbell government and a parliamentary secretary in the Mulroney government. A decision was made that \$10 million would be set aside to help create, manage and preserve some of the natural heritage of the Rouge park. That brought in a heightened significance of how special the natural heritage of the Rouge is.

Consequently, there have been provincial governments that have also recognized its significance. Through the 1990s and the early 2000s, the Mike Harris government transferred thousands of acres of land into the management of the park. Also through that time, plans were made to manage the Rouge in a more effective way so that we could preserve and protect the national heritage of the area.

As we have got a little bit further into the discussion, there were thoughts about what could be done to protect the Rouge park. As it has been mentioned, the Rouge park falls into two different categories. There is a Toronto category, and then there is a York region part of it.

• (1215)

For those who do not know the area, in the Toronto category there is a large street called Steeles Avenue. South of Steeles Avenue, some of the most extraordinary natural heritage in Ontario or Canada can be evidenced through the Rouge park there. It is absolutely spectacular. I do not think anybody can question that.

North of Steeles Avenue, we start coming into more agricultural areas. A vast majority of the land to the north of Highway 7, which would be put into Rouge park, is agricultural land that has been farmed for hundreds of years. This is not just a new concept. This land has been farmed for hundreds of years. In fact, I would invite all of my colleagues in the House to look at a program called *The Curse of the Axe*. This program highlights the Wendat people who were settled in this area some 500 years ago. It was discovered that the Wendat people had been farming those very same lands. The extent to which they were farming completely changed how we viewed our first nations and the role that they played in agriculture and trading in the area. I would invite all my colleagues to look at the program. It will highlight again how long this land has been farmed.

North of Highway 7, it is farming. To the south, as the member for Scarborough—Guildwood rightly pointed out, we have the 401, a hydro corridor, the Toronto Zoo and, on one edge of it, there is a landfill. However, there are extraordinary pockets of incredible beauty that the Ontario government, the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and what was previously the Rouge Park Alliance had been working on preserving for a number of years. We

have done that with partners in the private sector. By and large, we have done a very good job.

However, when the concept started evolving with respect to a national urban park, and we knew we had some excess airport lands, that is when the debate started to change a bit. We knew, as has been mentioned by other speakers, that we could do something very special here. We could protect the natural heritage of the Rouge Valley, but at the same time we could extract those lands that had become surplus to any potential airport needs, and put them back into a Rouge park so these lands could be protected for a long time to come.

The Ontario Farmland Trust, a non-profit organization that promotes farmland preservation, said, “The new Rouge National Urban Park offers one of the most innovative opportunities for the protection of farmland resources, agricultural heritage and local food production in our generation.”

If I am not mistaken, it is only 1%. This is class 1 farmland. We have lost so much farmland in this area to development. In the park south of Steeles Avenue, pretty much all of the farming that was there is now gone. I believe that we have to do our absolute best to ensure that the class 1 farmland on the northern part of the future park is preserved and saved, and that we allow our farmers to continue to farm, using best farm practices, for a very long time.

Our farmers are sometimes condemned as not being proper stewards of the land. I disagree. These lands have been farmed for hundreds of years, and our farmers are some of the best stewards of the land. The proposal that has been brought forward by the minister would see these farmers finally get long-term leases. Bear in mind that these farmers have been working on yearly leases. It is very hard, if not impossible, for them to make investments in the land that they have been farming. They cannot make the investments that most farmers would want to make. They are forced into a certain type of farming because they are on a yearly lease. This has disadvantaged the farmers in this area for a very long time.

• (1220)

We have the opportunity through this legislation to do both things that are very important, to protect the natural heritage of the park, while at the same time reversing decades of poor treatment of farmers in the area.

That is why I am very excited about this. Obviously throughout this process there has been a lot of debate. The member for Wellington—Halton Hills and I have not always seen eye to eye on this. We have had a tremendous amount of debate. When the proposal first came to me as the member of Parliament for Oak Ridges—Markham to create a Rouge national urban park, I was dead set against it if it meant that farmers in my riding would be disadvantaged the way they had been and if they were to be treated the way they had been under the existing Rouge Park management.

Government Orders

There is a 2001 Rouge Park management plan. Part of that management plan calls for a 600-metre corridor. The net result of that corridor would mean the elimination, at a minimum, of 1,700 acres of class 1 farmland and that is completely unacceptable to me, to farmers and to my constituents. We can make sure that we work with the farmers, who are not opposed to making sure that the entire ecosystem is protected. They want to work together with government to make sure that they can do that. I want to read a letter from the York Region Federation of Agriculture, which represents farmers in the area, to the hon. Brad Duguid, the Ontario minister who has highlighted that the Ontario government does not want to transfer the land. It says:

The York Region Federation of Agriculture members are the 700 farm businesses in York Region and Toronto including the farmers in the Rouge National Urban Park. ...you arrived at your decision to not recommend the Provincial land transfers after discussions with stakeholders and local citizen groups. You did not consult with the York Region Federation of Agriculture, the farmers in the Park, or the community living in the Park. We urge you not to hold up the transfer of Provincial lands to Parks Canada.

The farming community in the Rouge National Urban Park are the same farm families that have been farming and caring for the land...for the past 200 years. The future of the farms in the Rouge National Urban Park have been in limbo since the farms were expropriated in the 1970's. The farmland in the Rouge National Urban Park is Class 1 Agricultural Land, meaning it is the best land for agriculture production. Less than 1% of Canada's farmland is Class 1. The farmers in the park have already given up 1000 acres of productive farmland in the Rouge National Urban Park to reforestation projects.

It continues:

We support Parks Canada's consultation process that engaged over 100 stakeholder groups and thousands of individuals to create the Rouge National Urban Park Draft Management Plan.

It went on to say:

We believe that Parks Canada will improve the ecological integrity of the Rouge National Urban Park while maintaining the farmland in food production.

I want to reference another letter, from the Cedar Grove community group to Minister Duguid. Cedar Grove is an extraordinary community within my riding, a very historical community. This is what it has to say:

On behalf of the Cedar Community Club, we write with regard to your letter of September 2...which presents your decision to withdraw your recommendation to support transfer of land to Rouge National Urban Park.... It was shocking to learn of your decision and we strongly disagree.... With the promise of the coming Rouge National Urban Park, there was an anticipated hope for stability for the farmers and residents of Cedar Grove and surrounding communities.

It went on to support what the minister has done to bring about the Rouge national urban park.

I want to talk about what has recently transpired with the Province of Ontario.

• (1225)

We obviously have been working with the Province of Ontario for a number of years. Since this announcement was made in the previous election of 2011 and rehighlighted in the throne speech, we have been working closely with the Province of Ontario to bring about the Rouge national urban park in a way that respects the ecological integrity and promotes the national heritage, but also protects the farmers and gives them the stability that they have been looking for since 1972.

I do not think it is a big secret that we were close to an agreement. We had a signed agreement with the Province of Ontario that we probably would have announced had an election not been called for the Province of Ontario. Then, after the election that changed, unbeknownst to any of us. I know I picked up the *Toronto Star* one day and saw a letter from Liberal Minister Duguid outlining the Liberals' concerns. They were no longer going to be transferring the land because they had some concerns with ecological integrity.

Never had they mentioned this before. The province had signed an agreement with us. The transfer was to happen. We were to move forward with a management plan that was working with the province and the stakeholders in the area. Then this came. Coincidentally, everything is held up until November 2015, after the next federal election. It is truly shameful.

It is worth remembering that these are the same provincial Liberals that had before requested, not ecological integrity, but money for the lands it was going to transfer. They wanted to be bought out. Therefore, when they asked for I think it was \$120 million, they had no concerns with what they were seeing then. Their concern was that they wanted to be bought out of their position in the lands; "Give us a hundred million dollars and we'll transfer it to you, no problem."

It was highlighted by people like Alan Wells, who was the final chair of the Rouge Park Alliance, that this had never been the case. Governments had transferred lands to the Rouge Park for a very limited amount, I believe for \$1. The provincial government had done that before. The provincial government of Mike Harris transferred lands to the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority so that it could be managed. That was pointed out to the minister, but they needed to get their \$100 million.

I really want to reiterate what the provincial Liberals' proposal would do. In his letter to the Minister of the Environment, he highlighted what the member for Scarborough—Guildwood and the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands talked about. It is worth noting that the member for Scarborough—Guildwood, the member for Scarborough—Rouge River, the member for Markham—Unionville, and I am not sure if anyone else, submitted petitions to the House supporting a 1994 framework, saying that this park could not go ahead unless the 1994 framework was supported. However, as I said earlier, the 1994 framework would cause 1,700 acres of class 1 farmland to be taken out of production. It would mean the eviction of farmers and would probably mean the closure of one of our most successful farms in the area, Whittamore's Farm.

To say that the farmers do not trust the provincial Liberal government on this is an understatement because they have seen this before. There was a park called Bob Hunter Memorial Park, where 600 acres of class 1 farmland was taken away from farmers. People who had lived there for 33 years were evicted. Trees were planted across this class 1 farmland. Millions of dollars were put into it. There was no consultation. It was done and forced upon these farmers. Therefore, the farmers do not trust the provincial government. Quite frankly, governments at the federal level have never undertaken a consultation process like we have on this, and that is all governments. The Conservative and Liberal governments in the past have never done what we have done now.

Government Orders

While I agree that the southern part of this extraordinary ecosystem needs to be protected, and that is what our legislation does, I do not agree that means sacrificing thousands of acres of class 1 farmland in order to create a Rouge national urban park.

• (1230)

I hope that members of the House will work with us to create a park that we can all be proud of and give the millions of people who live in this area access to a treasure that we will be able to brag about because we helped create it.

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary kept bringing up farmers over and over again. He made numerous references to the 1972 expropriation of land by the federal government and then the one-year leases that have since followed. Many of the farms that the member was speaking about are actually outside of the land that was expropriated.

There are still some farms today, but there is actually only one family farm that is left from that original era when the land was expropriated. It is owned by the Tapscotts, who folks in Scarborough will know quite well. They immigrated from Scarborough to Pickering to farm that land and they have been sitting on those one-year leases ever since.

The member made reference to how horrible it was that all that land was stripped away, but then successive governments, both Liberal and Conservative, have continued to ignore that problem. He is worried about the loss of a bit of farmland upstream from the area that he thinks needs to be protected. If the land upstream is not protected, then the land downstream will not be protected either.

We have class 1 farmland in that expropriated land that could be turned to farming today. It is laying fallow. Why does the government not want to address that issue, which would also help the park, instead of continuing with this plan? It hurt farmers again when the government reannounced plans for the airport that we are not sure we need.

• (1235)

Mr. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, the member is wrong. The vast majority of the land in that area is actually farmed as part of an agricultural preserve. In fact, I hazard to say all of it is farmed on one-year leases, unfortunately.

This is the problem that we have. By supporting the 1994 framework, farmers have to be evicted and 1,700 acres of class 1 farmland have to be taken out of production, at a minimum. I do not agree with that. I am sorry but I do not agree with that. I think we could do both. We could protect the ecological integrity of the park, we could also protect farmers, and we could create something that would be of benefit to all Canadians and certainly of extraordinary benefit to the people in the GTA.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have been in and around this issue for quite a number of years. I have gone to quite a number of public meetings and met with a number of farmers, though not a huge number. I know the area intimately because my family had a farm a little west of there. We would drive through the Reesor Road and the Reesor farm. We know the Whittamores and Tapscotts, et cetera.

I realize I am advancing in my years, but my memory still occasionally serves me. I do not recollect any conversation in which it was stated that the farmers are going to be evicted or are somehow or other going to be circumscribed. In fact, were the plan to have been presented by the government, we might have actually gotten 5, 10 or 15-year leases that would give the stabilization that the hon. member wishes the farmers to have.

I think the conversation with the farmers has consisted of the management of watersheds, the kinds of pesticides or not that are put on the land, the kind of phosphorous or not that is put on the land, public access, things of that nature. I see the conversation with the farmers as relatively mature. I think, frankly, the hon. member mischaracterizes the fear of the farmers. A lot of the people who are keenly interested in this park south of Steeles are, in fact, big farmer fans north of Steeles.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, we cannot fulfill the promise that the member has just talked about.

The member is talking about the 1994 framework for the Rouge. We cannot fulfill that promise. We cannot take 1,700 acres of class 1 farmland out of production without evicting farmers. It is impossible to do. With 1,700 acres of land, farmers would have to be evicted. We saw this through the creation of the Bob Hunter Memorial Park.

Whether we like the Bob Hunter Memorial Park or not is not the issue. The reality is that it was 1,600 acres of class 1 farmland taken away from farmers with no notice. People who had lived there for 33 years were evicted from their homes. Therefore, we cannot do what the member is suggesting without evicting farmers.

I read for members, and I am happy to table it, the letter from the York Region Federation of Agriculture supporting the process that we are putting in place and highlighting the fears its members have. The fears they have come from decades of being treated poorly, decades of being removed from their lands, and decades of not being listened to.

We have an opportunity to listen to farmers and protect the ecological integrity, natural beauty and heritage of the park. We can do that through this Parliament. We can stop playing political games, as I would suggest Minister Duguid and the provincial Liberals are doing, and we can create a good park.

• (1240)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister for his excellent speech and also for his passion in defending farmers.

The member gave us a bit of a history lesson that is important to reiterate. It was under the Trudeau Liberals in the 1970s that farmers were evicted from their lands and given these short-term one-year leases for this important class 1 farmland.

Now we see that the provincial Liberals, and it appears the federal Liberals, are endorsing a plan for the Rouge Valley that would completely evict farmers from class 1 farmland. As the member said, this is land that has been farmed for hundreds of years. Our first nations farmed this land. Now, under threat from the Liberals, they want to evict these farmers, these hard-working Canadians who have been there for years.

Government Orders

I wonder if the parliamentary secretary could take some time to explain a little more to our colleagues who obviously do not understand the bill and have not read it. How does the bill support our hard-working farmers?

Mr. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, again, Parks Canada has been talking to our farmers.

The bill seeks to give our farmers long-term leases so that they could make investments on the land and use best farming practices to continue to do what they have been doing for years, as did the Wendat people, as the member said.

I would again encourage members to take a look at the movie, *Curse of the Axe*. They can Google it and see what the Wendat people were doing in this area. It is absolutely extraordinary. Members should also take the time to go to the Canadian Museum of History and see some of the artifacts from this area. It is stunning what they accomplished. It completely changes our attitudes on how our first nations farmed and interacted with other people.

This is a \$140 million commitment to create a Rouge national urban park. It is a commitment to protect the ecological integrity of the park. It is a commitment to restore the dignity of our farmers, give them the long-term leases that they deserve and allow us to create something very special in an area that is home to some five million people.

I think we can get it done and I am looking forward to members supporting the bill and creating the Rouge national urban park.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we looked at Rouge Park at committee during an urban conservation study. We heard from Parks Canada about the extensive consultation it has done and the way it has worked to try to bring everyone on board. However, as members heard earlier, this is going to be a difficult park to figure out. There are a lot of different interests, one might say competing interests. Parks Canada has done a good job of making sure that everyone is at the table and of trying to find out where the overlap is and how we can move forward with this.

I am in the same position as my colleague for Scarborough—Guildwood when he said earlier that he was surprised to even see that the bill has been tabled. I am surprised that we are still talking about the bill, because we do not know what the park will be. Without the transfer of lands from Ontario, we barely know what we are discussing here.

This is not a partisan question, but I wonder if government is open to taking a step back and pressing pause on this, because I do not know that we are ready to debate a bill when we do not even know what the park will look like.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Mr. Speaker, the member is right. Parks Canada has done a very good job. It is world-renowned in the work it does to protect and manage our parks.

We are going ahead with the bill because it is important to do so. The door will remain open to the Province of Ontario to transfer its lands. The door will remain open, as it always has, but we have to move forward with protecting the farmers in the area and protecting those lands that are owned by Markham. The current federal airport lands can be taken out of the airport reserve and put into a farming preserve. I do not think that anybody in the House would disagree

that removing thousands of acres from a future potential airport and putting it into farming is a bad idea. It is a good idea, and we would protect our farmers.

Moving forward, we will leave the door open to the Province of Ontario, if it becomes satisfied with what it sees, if it decides to stop playing politics. I would be more interested in what the province had to say if it had not picked an arbitrary date of November 2015 and had not at one point said, “Give us \$100 million and it's yours”. I do not trust that the provincial government wants to create a park with the highest ecological standards. However, I think if we can remove it and continue with the bill, we would protect the farm lands by taking that out of any future potential airport. Even at that, it is a win for my area and the environment.

• (1245)

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise to speak on a bill that deals with my hometown of Scarborough.

The possibilities and, as the parliamentary secretary said, the promise of this national urban park is certainly something for all of us to get excited about. It is a new type of park for a new era. With 80% of Canadians now living in urban environments, we need to have some national urban parks. This is really the test bed, the thing that any future endeavour is going to be measured against. It is incredibly important for us to get it right from the beginning.

The member was talking about political games being played by the provincial government, having delayed the decision until November 2015. This was an election promise that the Conservatives made in 2011. It was in the throne speech, and yet it has taken three years to get here.

Just like many other items, including trade deals, the Conservatives are announcing that the mission is accomplished before they have all the ducks in a row, before they have got the land from the province.

When my colleague from Halifax asked the question about hitting the pause button until we actually know what park we are dealing with, she asked a very relevant question. Given all the uncertainties, I am not sure how, once we get past second reading, into committee, and then come back for third reading, any member in this House could turn around and vote in favour of a park when we do not even know what the boundaries would be, without resolving this issue with the provincial government first.

If all the concerns can be addressed and a deal reached, then that would be the appropriate time to continue to move forward with the bill.

I find it interesting that we are hearing all these accusations of political games, when the Conservatives are playing the same games.

Government Orders

Over and over again, we heard about the Trudeau government in the 1970s expropriating land from the farmers and how much it hurt farmers. After Trudeau there was Joe Clark, and after Joe Clark there was Turner, and after Turner there was Mulroney, and after Mulroney there was Chrétien, and then Paul Martin. Now we have had eight years of the current Conservative government, and none of them have taken the steps to address that harm to the farmers that happened 40 years ago. None of them have taken the time to address those issues and to actually get that land farmed.

The member incorrectly stated that most of the land in the Pickering airport lands is being farmed right now. I would recommend that he take a drive around the area again, because most of the land is lying fallow. Many of the homes are falling down because the government has not maintained its responsibility to keep them in good repair. It is ignoring it.

The member should speak to Land Over Landings and take a drive around with its members. They are not scary people.

I know the government likes to play the game of friends and enemies game, and the game of “you are with us or you are against us”.

When the member for Oshawa was introducing the bill, and when I asked questions about the Friends of the Rouge Watershed's concerns that the protections would not match what is there now, he completely ignored it and dismissed the Friends of the Rouge Watershed as a fringe group.

Nothing will ever be accomplished in Rouge Park without buy-in from the Friends of the Rouge Watershed. They are the ones who have been there on the ground. They are the volunteers who have cared for and loved that park for 40 years. They are not going to let it be torn apart. They are not the fringe. They are the stakeholders. They are the people who are invested in that park already and have been for generations. Getting them onside is also critically important.

They went to the provincial government because they found there was nobody at the federal level who was willing to listen to them. I wish the provincial government had made this point before the last provincial election. That would have been a good time to make a stand on this and would have pushed all the leaders of the parties on that issue, and would have brought a really important Scarborough issue to the forefront.

I think that would have been really good for the debate and for making sure that this park that is going to be created is actually going to be the park we want and the park we need.

I have some personal experience with the park over the years, from visiting there as a child with my grandmother. Probably not many members of this House know, but for the first five years that I worked, from age 15 to 20, I worked in a daycare. I worked for Not Your Average Daycare in Scarborough. It has several locations across Scarborough.

●(1250)

They really had an innovative program. During the summertime, they used to take all the school-age programs from the different daycares and put them into one central location to basically create a summer camp. For the vast majority of the kids who were attending

daycare, it was far beyond their families' financial means to send them away to camp, to have that experience in nature. By bringing all these school-age programs together, we would be able to give them a summer camp. It was still in the city and it was in a school, but we were able to take them to different places, so they could have some of those experiences.

One of the most important trips was the one out to Rouge Park. It is just magnificent when one comes into the park, because one sees that blend of urban and rural, of park and city. At the entrance to the park, it is abutted against the CN tracks, and then there is a beach. There is the fabulous Rouge beach. There is the lake, the beach, and then the train tracks, and of course all the myriad sounds that go with it.

On the other side are magnificent wetlands and a pond that are just spectacular. Individuals could be in a canoe and close their eyes and feel they are in Algonquin Park or hundreds of kilometres away outside the city. They could decide to paddle up or down the Rouge River. People who have spent time in a canoe know the sounds of rapids and waterfalls, and they have to be alert because they do not want to encounter any of those when they are in a canoe. On the Rouge, they do not have that, but as they approach highway overpasses and roads, they get a very similar sound from the cars going across the roadway. It sounds very much like rushing water. They can actually merge the two forums here.

It presents unique challenges, because there are not too many national parks that have to deal with city-sized infrastructure, whether we are talking about sewers, roadways, or electrification. Rouge Park, I would think, would certainly be the park with the best cellphone access that we can imagine, and that presents challenges to enjoying nature, but it also presents opportunities and new mediums to educate the population. I am thrilled that Parks Canada is working on an interpretive program based on a cellphone app that would actually give people self-guided tours in Rouge Park, one of those ways to actually harness technology to enhance the experience within the park.

I spent a lot of time there myself, growing up, and I also like taking the train whenever possible in my travels between Toronto and Ottawa, but certainly I used GO Transit back and forth, visiting friends and family all across the east end of Toronto.

One of the most spectacular sights I have ever seen in Toronto—my colleague, the member for Scarborough—Guildwood, skated on it—is that pond in the wintertime when it is frozen, and all of a sudden Canada's national obsession takes over and a couple of nets get placed down and we get shinny and a skating rink on the pond, inside the boundaries of Toronto. It is a unique experience to have pond hockey happening in Toronto in the wintertime. It is not something anybody would think of, but it is just one of those unique facets of the park that make it a multi-use facility all year round.

Government Orders

There are also snowshoeing excursions in the wintertime, and my one experience of trying to do that did not result in much success, not because of the snowshoes and my falling down, although that would have happened many times, but actually because of one of the barriers to the park. Back then, I did not have a vehicle. My partner and I intended to take public transit on a Sunday to get there. The subway does not open until 9:00 a.m. on Sundays and the bus takes a long time, even from east-end Toronto, not even downtown or the west end. To get all the way out to Rouge Park via public transit can take two hours from the east end of town.

That is another problem that would have to be addressed, the public transit access to the park, because one of the main features is supposed to be public transit access. The public transit file is an absolute mess in Toronto these days, and certainly in the municipal election, one would have hoped that many new and great ideas would come forward.

● (1255)

Unfortunately two of the candidates, John Tory and Doug Ford, both have transit plans that end at the Scarborough Town Centre, that do not address anything in the eastern half of Scarborough. They do not even come close to addressing better transit access to the Rouge Park.

The only candidate who does have a plan that addresses improved transit in eastern Scarborough is Olivia Chow, the one person who uses public transit, and always has. She has never owned a car and every time she visits east Toronto, she takes transit out there, and I know how long it takes from all my years of using public transit.

Transit presents some unique challenges as well as some unique opportunities for the use of the park.

Other issues have come up.

I am sure that part of the reason why the province has decided to potentially hold up transferring this land, beyond the political games, is the environmental changes the Conservative government has made that have degraded environmental protections, in particular, the Navigable Waters Act.

Rouge River used to be a protected waterway, but it no longer has that protected status. Municipal infrastructure criss-crosses the park in different places. Line 9B pipeline crosses through the park. A few years ago there was an erosion where parts of the pipe were exposed. It took three days to get access to the pipeline. This means that if we ever have a spill at some point and it takes days before people get there to start to address the problem, then we need much more stringent environmental protections, even something as having stop valves on each side of the river.

If the Rouge River still had navigable waters protection, stop valves would be a required change with the reversing of the flow. We are dealing with a 40-year old pipeline and we have no additional protections. Approval has been given to run oil the other way and at a higher psi. This is problematic on old pipe.

Looking ahead at any other projects that might come forward, whether it is Energy East or anything else, we have to ensure that the strongest protections and measures are in place so that when pipelines cross crucial environmentally sensitive areas like the

Rouge River, they will minimize and mitigate as much of the risk as is humanely possible.

It is just a fact of life that it is impossible to eliminate all risks in all situations, but we can do a lot to prevent problems from happening rather than simply picking up the pieces after a problem occurs. Unfortunately, with the changes to the Navigable Waters Act, this is the situation in which the federal government has left us. More effort is going to be put into cleaning up a problem than into preventing one from happening in the first place.

There are fish species in the river and there are migratory birds and endangered species. The endangered Carolinian forest is a very unique bit of forest in southern Ontario. The Rouge River is one of the only places in Canada that has that type of forest.

It is incredibly important that we do what we can to get things right. It is important that we have the right framework, the right protections in place to ensure that the park serves for generations to come. It is important that it set a really high standard that can be met for future national urban parks or even provincial and municipal urban parks that would follow.

Lots of folks on the other side forget that the federal government has a role to play with respect to leadership. The federal government should be ahead of the provinces and the municipalities when it comes to its thinking on environmental protection, so that thinking can filter down to other levels of government. We do not have that and we see that across the board with the Conservatives.

The Conservatives opposed a \$15 minimum wage that would have sent a strong message toward fighting inequality in our country. They opposed it because they did not think it would impact a lot of people. It would not impact their people is more of the reason why they would oppose that.

I again bring attention to the fact that when introducing the bill, the member for Oshawa dismissed the Friends of the Rouge Watershed as an outright nuisance group and as radicals, as members on the other side so often do. Now that is coming back to bite them, because they now have a supporter in the provincial government.

● (1300)

The Conservatives want to lay blame at Trudeau's feet. Let us lay the blame at the feet of every Liberal and Conservative government that has followed for not addressing the issues of farmers for the last 40 years in that area.

My colleague from Beaches—East York, our agriculture critic and I toured the Pickering airport lands last year as part of a fact finding mission to see what we should do with this land. It is a tremendous track of green space. It is class A farmland that should be used for farming. It was taken away and has, in many cases, laid fallow for a really long time.

Government Orders

As I said, there is only one family farm left there, belonging to the Tapscotts, who emigrated from Scarborough many years ago. They have not updated any of their equipment or introduced any new practices in the last 40 years because the land could be taken away from them at any moment. As a result, they do not run as efficiently or as ecologically as they could, because successive Liberal and Conservative governments have failed to address the issue or at least give them the opportunity for a 10 or 15-year lease where they can invest back into the land that has provided for their family for generations. We would like to see that addressed at some point as well.

All of this consternation has really left us wondering if this park will ever be created. Under existing legislation, the province states that the protections are higher than those the federal government would put in place with the introduction of this park. Maybe the federal government could go back and talk to the provincial government to see about addressing these concerns. We will raise them here, and we will raise them in committee, but it is up to the Conservative government to act. It is the government.

The government is forging ahead without an agreement with the largest stakeholder in the province, which controls a huge amount of the land for this park. It is just incredible that it would steam ahead without having that agreement in place with the province. The parliamentary secretary said that we had an agreement, and that there was a memorandum of understanding. The province now thinks that the federal government is not upholding that standard and that the protections that would be put in place would not as good as what is there now.

The government is going say that it is better. Why does it not take the time to explain to Canadians why it thinks it is better than what is there now? Have those conversations with the provincial government.

I do not know why the government always seems to have so many problems discussing things with the provinces. It does not matter whether we are talking to health care, the environment or parks. It just seems to like to roughshod over everybody else. Frankly, the leader knows best, they will put it in place and everyone just has to trust them.

As one of my colleagues said, “just trust us” is not enough. That is not the barometer for any transparent or accountable government in our country. I would even argue that a future NDP government has to have opposition, effective critics and people on all sides of the argument, ensuring that they are coming together, because that is what makes bills and legislation.

In this case, it will make for a better park. Hearing from all sides and addressing as many of the concerns as humanly possible will ensure that we have a park that meets the best environmental standards. It will ensure that the farming continues to be allowed but that it is done in the most ecological manner possible, with the least amounts of phosphates and pesticides, and the most organic products available.

Let us use that area as a best example that we can share with other jurisdictions about how to coexist between farm and urban settings. We will need to have more of this in the future as more of Canada

becomes urbanized and as we require more food to be developed locally. It is important for the future of our planet to ensure that more food is developed and produced locally so as to have fewer environmentally negative impacts.

•(1305)

We have a lot of problems with the bill as it is. I will be happy to see my colleagues in the environment committee eventually see this and study it further. I hope for once that we can actually see some compromise from the government so we can achieve what we all want to achieve, which is a national urban park in the Rouge Valley.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member talked about Land Over Landings. Looking at a number of its tweets, it talks about how it is able, through the agricultural preserve in this area, to feed the people of Toronto.

The member talks about the land not being farmed. I live there, and as I drive to Ottawa every Sunday night and come back from Ottawa every Friday night, I drive through this area that is all farmed. Every acre of it is farmed. The acres that are not farmed are the ones that were taken away from farmers and reforested.

I ask a very simple question for the member. The 1994 protocol calls for a 600-metre corridor. Jim Robb, Friends of the Rouge Watershed, suggested that at a minimum 1,700 acres of class 1 farmland would be taken out of production to create this corridor. That means farmers will be evicted. Is that what the member supports?

Mr. Dan Harris: Mr. Speaker, I brought up the land that is not being farmed, which is the much larger tract of land. The member speaks of 1,700 acres. Thousands of acres are not being farmed right now as part of the reserved lands for the Pickering Airport.

We can find a way to have our cake and eat it too. Yes, those farmers have been there for many years and in some cases for hundreds of years. If we cannot find a way for them to continue to farm there ecologically in a way that is sustainable and that will not be a nuisance to the future park, the federal government has ample land that it could let them farm right next door. They can have a corridor—

Mr. Paul Calandra: It's already farmed.

Mr. Dan Harris: Mr. Speaker, not the land inside the park. He just said the land inside the reserved area is not.

Mr. Paul Calandra: No, I didn't. I said it's all farmed, every acre.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. The hon. member for Scarborough Southwest has the floor. It is sure difficult for members to understand when the conversation goes back and forth. I encourage members to direct their commentary to the Chair, and that sometimes avoids that sort of thing.

The hon. member for Scarborough Southwest will finish his comment.

Government Orders

Mr. Dan Harris: Mr. Speaker, I apologize. I really do wish at times that the microphones would pick up more of that other side of the conversation because they would really hear how nonsensical some of the things they say in response to us are.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister is trying to say that all the land within the reserve of the Pickering Airport land is being farmed right now. It is not. There is one family farm left, and that is the Tapscotts. There are other farms, but there are entire ghost towns in that area that the current government and other governments have continued to ignore. They could be used as farmland.

If we cannot find a way to work out the differences between Friends of the Rouge Watershed and the farmers, there are alternatives there. However, I think solutions can be found.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think it was Bismarck who said that there are two things in life we should not actually see. One is the making of sausages and the second is the making of legislation. This does seem to be the situation here today. I do not know what is out in the lounge to eat this afternoon, but I hope it is not sausages.

Let us concede that the parliamentary secretary has a concern about his farmers, and some of those farmers are on provincial lands and some of them are on federal lands. If in fact he is concerned about security of tenure, which is a legitimate concern, presumably the federal government could unilaterally set in place longer-term leases, set ecological standards for the management of the land and make it consistent with Parks Canada standards.

That would leave the farmers, over which he has some direct control, some ability to farm in an ecologically and commercially sustainable fashion. I would be interested in the hon. member's comments.

• (1310)

Mr. Dan Harris: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for making sense, unlike our colleagues on the other side. That is exactly what must happen. The member is hung up on 1994. It has been 20 years and there are changes required and things that need to be updated. Until Friends of the Rouge Watershed hears a better plan from the government, which it has not yet, it will hold on to the plan that was there. It would be happy to negotiate an updated framework for 2014 if it was engaged on the issue. That is what is missing. The government has cast it off as an enemy and will not listen to anything it has to say.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I find this a fascinating discussion. There was a period of time when my family left northern Ontario and moved to Scarborough in the mid-seventies. When we moved to Warden—Finch, the backyard of our home was farmers' fields. People told me how 10 years before at Ellesmere it had been farmers' fields. Anyone wanting to date a Markham girl had to drive through miles and miles of cornfields before getting to the centre of Markham. That is all gone now. It has been heavily transformed into heavy urbanization.

As we see the increasing urbanization in southern Ontario, there is a need to have some levels of planning. I remember being told in school that some of the best class 1 farmlands in the entire country could be seen from the CN Tower. Much of that has been paved over

and turned into condo development. Therefore, I would like to ask my hon. colleague this. What lessons can we learn from the issue of the Rouge and the importance of the Rouge River in terms of parkland, in terms of maintaining viable agriculture and viable wildlife space within the increasing urbanization of southern Ontario?

Mr. Dan Harris: Mr. Speaker, my family goes back so far in Scarborough that St. Clair was farmland back when we settled in Scarborough. I am happy he asked the question about some of the lessons learned because it brings up something that I did not get to in my speech. Although I had an entire 20-minute speech prepared, I barely even looked at it.

The heat island effect was debated very recently in the House. Green spaces like the Rouge Park help to offset that incredible urban heat island effect that happens in our cities and artificially inflates the temperature. It causes more ecological problems, especially in the summertime, because if it is 2°, 3° or 4° hotter in the city people will have to make more use of air conditioning, electricity and other mitigating factors to offset what they have used. That is an important lesson.

However, we also have to move beyond thinking that we cannot have farm and city coexisting, just like business and environmental protection are not mutually exclusive but should be working hand in hand. The more food we can produce locally, the better off all of our cities will be in the future.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened attentively to the member opposite talk about the issues related to Rouge Park. The Province of Ontario is showing a complete disregard for the creation of the park based on cheap political calculations and has expressed its so-called ecological concern at this late date.

I live 100 metres from the park and the lower Rouge Park is in my riding. I can tell members that the state of the park and its bare administration during the years has translated into continued neglect. This neglect was also briefly alluded to by the member for Scarborough—Guildwood.

I am asking the hon. member this. Does he or does he not support the creation of the first national urban park or is he endorsing the Ontario provincial Liberal government's steps to decide to deny and to delay the creation of the park?

• (1315)

Mr. Dan Harris: Mr. Speaker, I would be surprised if anyone in this chamber does not strongly support the creation of a national urban park, but the devil is in the details and the devil is always in the details. The province might be playing political games, but the government has its narrative set up already, that the province is withholding and playing cheap political games to prevent the park from happening. The follow-up line is that they have been neglecting the park.

Government Orders

If we really want to play that game, let us go right back to the reason I became involved in politics, which was Mike Harris and the devastating damage he did to environmental protections in Ontario. If we really want to go back into why there is trouble in our parks, we just have to look back at the Mike Harris era. It devastated environmental protections and started the move to self-regulation that the current government has been more than happy to continue with: self-regulation of rail, of food inspections and of airline safety. That was all started during the Mike Harris government, that era of neglect of our safety and our parks.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise today to participate in the debate on the legislation in front of us, which would create a first in Canada, a new national urban park in the greater Toronto area.

The first thing I want to do is acknowledge all the people who have worked tirelessly on this issue for over two decades. Literally tens of thousands of Canadians in the greater Toronto area and the Golden Horseshoe have been involved with this initiative.

This started some 25 years ago, as members opposite and on this side of the House have mentioned, when agricultural lands and open spaces began to be paved over by the ever-growing sprawl in the greater Toronto area. At that time many concerned citizens decided to get involved, become activists, petition and call upon municipal, provincial and federal governments to preserve this important part of Canada's biodiversity.

It started with the involvement of those citizens in the 1980s that then led to an adoption in the House in the 1990s of a motion that minister Pauline Browes introduced and was continued with by people like Glenn De Baeremaeker on Toronto's City Council.

More recently, in the 1990s, work was done by the Rouge Park Alliance, which was chaired by Mr. Alan Wells, past chief administrative officer of the Region of York, appointed by premier McGuinley to chair that alliance. I had the privilege of sitting on that alliance with a number of municipal and provincial stakeholders in recent years and doing very important work with Mr. Wells. Minister Flaherty appointed me to that alliance in June of 2008 and I worked with that group for about five years.

When I was first appointed to the Rouge Park Alliance, I had no idea about this gem in York region, now the city of Markham, and the city of Toronto. As an MP from the west part of the GTA, I had no idea that this ecological gem existed and what is even more surprising is that I lived in the city of Toronto for 15 years and I had no idea, as a Torontonians then, that this existed on the eastern part of the reaches of the city. After I was appointed to the Rouge Park Alliance, I quickly became aware. The scales were dropped from my eyes and I became aware of this precious area in the eastern part of the GTA.

The Rouge Park Alliance and its members worked together for a period of about a year and a half to take a look at the future of the park. There were many challenges that the park and the area faced. One was a very complex system of governance that had no legal standing to affect outcomes, a multiplicity of players and interests that all had competing agendas. It was decided that we needed to come forward with a new governance model.

Therefore, the Rouge Park Alliance spent a year and a half consulting dozens and dozens of stakeholders about the future of the park. That culminated in a report that was adopted in early 2010 by the Rouge Park Alliance, adopted unanimously I might add, that recommended the creation of a national urban park in the Rouge watershed. That is the genesis of how we got to where we are today.

The legislation in front of us is the result of broad consultations. There are two sets of consultations in particular I would like to focus on to illustrate the number of people and the depth of the consultations.

The first set of consultations were held between 2008 and 2010 by the Rouge Park Alliance itself. The Rouge Park Alliance was made up of representatives from the Government of Canada, the province of Ontario and all constituent municipalities, the city of Toronto, the region of York, the town of Markham, as it was then called, Durham region, Pickering and Ajax, stakeholders like the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, environmental groups like Save the Rouge. They were all represented at the table by the Rouge Park Alliance. When we conducted that year-and-a-half analysis that produced the report, we consulted widely, not only with stakeholders but with many other people in the region.

• (1320)

We consulted with organizations such as the Waterfront Regeneration Trust, environmental groups like the David Suzuki Foundation and the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, dozens of meetings with dozens of stakeholders. Those consultations produced the report of the Rouge Park Alliance, in early 2010, recommending the creation of a national urban park.

Now, after that report was approved unanimously by the Rouge Park Alliance, a number of us convinced Minister Flaherty and the then minister of the environment, the current member for Thornhill, that this was an important initiative, that the Government of Canada should get behind this initiative, that we should concur in that report, and that we should act on this.

As a result, in 2011, the cabinet deliberated on this proposal from the Rouge Park Alliance in a memorandum to cabinet and came to a record of decision that decided the Government of Canada would support the creation of a national urban park. In the fall of 2011, after cabinet approval, Parks Canada was instructed by the minister and the Office of the Privy Council to begin public consultations, the second round of consultations, concerning the creation of this new park. Those consultations were even more broad and deeper than the consultations that had been held previously by the Rouge Park Alliance.

Parks Canada heard from 11,000 Canadians about the future of this park, consulted with 150 stakeholder groups, and included MPs such as the MP for Scarborough—Rouge River, who I had the pleasure of personally inviting to a consultation that was held by Parks Canada at the University of Toronto's Scarborough campus in the fall of 2011. Out of those consultations came a draft management plan, which Parks Canada has been working on, and the legislation in front of us today.

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The legislation has been the result of not just broad and deep consultations, but the work of thousands of ordinary citizens, ordinary Canadians who care deeply about the environment in which they live. Therefore, the legislation is the on-paper dream of many tens of thousands of people who live in the greater Golden Horseshoe.

It is important to note that the legislation is not simply paper. Minister Flaherty, when he was alive, put \$144 million in the fiscal framework for this park for the first 10 years it comes into existence. The money has been budgeted. There is real money and real resources, \$144 million, that will go to the creation and support of this park, and \$7.6 million a year after the first 10 years. This is real money that would lead to the tangible result of the creation of this national urban park.

I urge members to support this park because of those resources that will be brought to bear, but I also urge them to support it for two very important reasons.

The first one is accessibility.

This park will sit in the greater Toronto area, and as such it will be accessible to millions of Canadians. It is unlike most other parks in our national parks system. Most parks in our national parks system are not accessible by millions of Canadians, especially Canadians living in the St. Lawrence Lowlands. They are not accessible geographically because they lie in far-flung places of the country, like Auyuittuq National Park on Baffin Island, or Jasper National Park, which I have never been to, out in the Alberta Rockies, or Pacific Rim National Park on Vancouver Island, or Gros Morne National Park in Newfoundland and Labrador. These parks are often far away and very expensive to get to.

This park is in the backyard of some 8.5 million Canadians who live in the greater Golden Horseshoe.

This park is not only accessible geographically to those millions of Canadians, many of whom are new Canadians who have never had the privilege of experiencing the great Canadian outdoors, it is also, unlike many of these national parks, accessible economically.

• (1325)

To get to Nahanni National Park to do a one- or two-week canoe trip, it can cost upwards of \$6,000 or \$7,000 per canoeist. That is well beyond the means of many Canadians. To hike up the Weasel River in Auyuittuq National Park, it can cost upwards of \$7,000 or \$8,000 just to get there, do the trip and get out. That is also well beyond the economic means of many Canadians.

This park, though, this national urban park in the Rouge Valley will be accessible by a simple subway stop, a \$3 TTC token or a simple car ride to that part of the country. This park is accessible in a way that millions of new Canadians will be able to enjoy. It will introduce them to our great treasure, our great national inheritance, our great outdoors.

It will also create a park that is 10 to 15 times the size of Central Park in Manhattan, a park that far outsizes Stanley Park in Vancouver. This is truly an opportunity for us to introduce millions of Canadians to the national park system, especially new Canadians, many of whom live in the greater Golden Horseshoe.

There is a second reason why this park should be supported by members on both sides, and that is ecology. There is an ecological reason to support this park. Parks Canada, through federal legislation, has a mandate to protect each ecologically significant part of Canada's biosphere. That is the mandate of Parks Canada.

We have done so to a large extent, as governments, present and past. We have protected the rainforest in the Pacific Rim National Park on the western reaches of Vancouver Island. We have protected the Atlantic coast and the great mountains of Atlantic Canada in Gros Morne National Park in Newfoundland.

We have protected much of the prairies and the boreal forest zones. We have protected pieces of the Rockies, such as Jasper and Banff National Parks. We have protected marine areas, like Fathom Five National Marine Park in Georgian Bay. We have protected much of Canada's unique biodiversity.

However, the one area in the country where we have not protected a significant piece of our biodiversity is in the Carolinian forest zone, an eastern deciduous forest zone. It is the forest zone that lies south of a line drawn between Stratford, Ontario, and the city of Toronto. I would argue it is one of the most precious ecological spaces in this country for one simple reason. It is the most dense biosphere in this country.

It contains the greatest number of species of flora and fauna. There are more species of flora and fauna per square kilometre in the eastern deciduous forest zone than in any other square kilometre of Canada's other pieces of biodiversity. However, as governments, we have yet to protect a significant chunk of that.

That is why the act is so very important. For the first time, we will protect thousands of acres of that precious biodiversity in this part of Canada.

When we came forward with this Rouge Park Alliance report, when the cabinet was deliberating on what to do to protect these thousands of acres of biodiversity, we had a conundrum.

The conundrum was this. The area of the Rouge watershed is replete with modern civilization. It has the 401 going through it. It has sewer lines from York Region that go through the York-Durham line onto Pickering and Ajax and to the water treatment plants on the shores of Lake Ontario. It has hydro lines. It has hundreds of kilometres of dirt and paved roads. It has civilization running through it. It has farmland. It has many other things that do not normally exist in our national park system.

Clearly, the government cannot remove the 401 from this part of the Rouge. It cannot remove the toll road, the 407, from this part of the Rouge. It cannot remove hydro lines or sewer pipes. It cannot do all that, and it has to acknowledge that this area is different than places such as Banff or Jasper or Gros Morne or Pacific Rim National Parks.

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The government had two options to pursue. One was to water down the national park standard, which has an ecological standard of wilderness. The other option was to create a new second type of national park. Wisely, the government decided to go down the second path. To water down the wilderness ecological standard of our national parks would put the future ecological integrity of those national parks at risk.

• (1330)

By introducing a second standard, we can create this firewall, so to speak, around the national urban park to ensure we do not weaken the national park standard of wilderness ecology.

We introduced the legislation to create a first, a national urban park that would still meet a very strict standard. In fact, it would exceed the provincial park standard in Ontario. It is similar to the provincial park standard in that it acknowledges existing uses such as agriculture, the 401 and the 407. It would acknowledge existing needs to stop forest fires and flooding, which we do not stop in national parks. It would acknowledge the need for hydro lines and sewer pipes to traverse the region. It would acknowledge the existence of agriculture. However, it is different than the provincial park standard because it is a stronger standard.

I love the Ontario provincial park system. Every summer I canoe through our beautiful provincial parks: in Algonquin Park from Canoe Lake up to Brent and back; through the beautiful lakes like OSA in Killarney Park, from Georgian Bay and through Baie Fine. I have canoed up the Missinaibi River, a provincially protected area, up to Moosonee.

I love our provincial park system, but in the crown jewel of the provincial park system, in Algonquin Park, the province of Ontario today allows logging. The Algonquin Provincial Park has a provincial logging authority. There is logging in the provincial park. The province also allows for hunting and fishing. I know because I have fished in Algonquin Park and caught a smallmouth bass. The province of Ontario's standards for provincial parks allow for resource extraction such as mining, logging, hunting and fishing.

This legislation and the government's draft management plan would not allow those activities to take place. It would not allow any resource extraction such as mining or logging to take place in the Rouge national urban park. It would not allow the removal of native species of flora and fauna. It would not allow for hunting, or for the removal of fossils or other national heritage features.

Also, this proposed legislation and its associated budget would, for the first time, ensure that full-time Parks Canada staff are on site 365 days of the year to enforce the national urban park standard. The dedicated year-round enforcement officers exclusive to the Rouge Park would prevent illegal dumping, hunting and other long-standing problems in the park area.

In closing, I strongly urge members to support the legislation. It may not be perfect, but it is very good legislation that would provide a lasting legacy for the millions of Canadians who live in this area.

When I have traversed Algonquin Park, I have often thought about the people and the leaders who had the wisdom and foresight in the late 19th century to stand up to the Ottawa lumber barons, to stand up to the vested interests, and say that we needed to preserve this

part of the transition forest between the boreal and the southern forests in Algonquin. I often think of those leaders who, over 100 years ago, had the foresight to establish this park so that today generations of Canadians have come to enjoy parks such as Algonquin.

The proposed legislation is in that spirit. The bill would benefit our children and grandchildren, and for that reason, I urge all members of the House to support it at second reading.

• (1335)

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I find the spirit the member presents today for the proposed legislation quite depressing. What I get from him is that we are going to create a second tier, a diluted watered-down tier, of national park that is an urban national park, because we cannot remove the 401, because we cannot remove hydro towers.

What the bill offers is the opportunity to make sense of the notion of urban ecological integrity. If the current Conservative government would hang on to that concept and apply it to an urban space, I think there is great hope for building ecological integrity into our urban spaces and our urban lives, which we need.

However, the notion that we need to rope off this area and have a lower concept of ecological integrity because it is urban is quite a dismal view of urban life in Canada and urban possibilities for Canadians, which, frankly, leaves me depressed.

I would like to hear the member's response to that.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, quite simply, this area could not possibly ever meet the national park ecological wilderness standard, for a number of reasons. First, in national parks, we allow uncontrolled forest fires to take place. We allow natural flooding to take place. We do not allow agriculture. We do not allow the construction of new underground sewer pipes in our national park system.

We have to acknowledge that this park sits in the GTA. It sits in southern Ontario in an area that has been subject to civilization for centuries. We need to ensure the co-uses of the area, such as agriculture, such as controlled flooding, such as the management of forest fires. That is why we need a second standard.

This is wonderful legislation, because it would also allow us, at some future date, to deal with the issue of Gatineau Park, across the river.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his thoughtful speech. As I said earlier, I think we could actually do business. I agree with him that we cannot set up a national parks standard similar to parks like the Nahanni, et cetera. I agree that this is off the table. However, he goes on with what I consider to be a straw man argument, which is that in the provincial parks, we can mine and log. Well, there is actually no discussion about mining or logging or resource extraction of any kind in this particular park. I am sure the five million people in the GTA who would enjoy this particular park more than possibly others would be absolutely outraged if that were allowed. I respectfully suggest that it is a straw man argument.

Government Orders

He goes to the standard set out in the bill, which he thinks is a wonderful standard. Were it to be accompanied by more forthcoming and understandable concepts, we would not be hearing concerns from the David Suzuki Foundation, Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, Wildlands League, Sierra Club, Save the Oak Ridges Moraine, Environmental Defence, and Friends of the Rouge Watershed, which have called on the government to uphold its commitment to the memorandum of agreement.

As it stands now, the draft federal legislation threatens to undermine 25 years of consultation, scientific study, and provincial policy. I am in a bit of a dilemma. I would like to believe the hon. member, but those who have actually studied this and participated in it do not.

• (1340)

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, I made reference to the provincial parks standard in Ontario simply because the Province of Ontario has raised this as an issue. I believe the province's position on this park is wrong. I believe that this legislation puts in place a stricter ecological standard than exists for Ontario's provincial parks system. It would create a stricter standard than exists today for Algonquin Provincial Park, Killarney Provincial Park, and the other parks in the Ontario parks system. That is why I referenced the provincial standard in Ontario in my speech.

The second point I would make is that if we were to talk to all the environmental NGOs on this issue, they would argue that they want to see improvements to the bill. That is fine, but as I have said many times in the House before, perfection is the enemy of the good. What we have here is very good legislation for a very good initiative that would create a first in Canada: a national urban park that would benefit millions of Canadians living in the Golden Horseshoe.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Royal Galipeau (Ottawa—Orléans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for the level of eloquence and knowledge he has brought to this debate.

[*English*]

I just want to ask him a question. What is the plan for urban reforestation under the bill?

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, the important thing to know about reforestation in the bill and in the draft management plan for the Rouge is that we would continue to allow agricultural use in the park. In fact, we would strengthen agricultural use in the park. We would go from one-year leases to multi-year leases that would allow the farmers to plan longer term, with a greater degree of certainty.

Also, the draft management plan, which supports continued agricultural use in the park, is strongly supported by almost every single environmental group. These are groups like the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, the David Suzuki Foundation, and many others. They strongly support the continuation of agricultural uses in the park. The draft management plan in this legislation would allow those uses to continue. The voice of the member for Oak Ridges—Markham, who has been so vocal and strong in this regard, will continue to be heard, and we will continue to allow agricultural uses.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Beaches—East York and I were talking about the fact that there is an actual debate happening here. I do not know if anyone noticed that, but it is exciting to talk about real ideas in the House.

In that spirit, I, too, want to believe my colleague across the way when he talks about this park having good legislation around it to keep its ecological integrity and about it being strong, robust legislation.

This is a comment more than a question. It is really hard to trust the government on this file, and it is hard when there is a national parks act that talks about maintaining ecological integrity and then we have one bill about one park that says we will “consider” ecological integrity. I can accept that there might need to be a new standard for urban parks. However, I would feel more comfortable if that new standard were a stand-alone discussion. Maybe there could be an amendment to the parks act that would say that if we have urban parks, we have to consider different things, because it is complicated. I do not know how that would be done, but we would feel more reassured knowing that this was not opening a door for every other forthcoming piece of park legislation and that this was actually about urban parks.

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member opposite that this legislation does not in any way, shape, or form impact the ecological wilderness standard of national parks like Jasper, Banff, and every other park in our national parks system. It establishes a new, second type of park, a national urban park. One of the things that might be helpful for the member opposite in allaying her concerns is to get a copy of the draft management plan for the park, if she does not have one already. She could perhaps put a question on the order paper, and I am sure Parks Canada would be obliged to provide that information to her.

• (1345)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the member for Wellington—Halton Hills will know that there is no other member in the House for which I have greater respect, except for the hon. member for Cape Breton—Canso, who raises his hand at this moment, so it pains me to disagree. I do hate to differ, and I literally regret differing with my hon. colleague from Wellington—Halton Hills.

While the present Bill C-40 does not do as much damage to the standards of national parks as did the Sable Island National Park Reserve act, which was regrettably passed by unanimous consent in June 2013, we have before us a bill that needs improvement. My friend from Wellington—Halton Hills referenced the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, but when I look at its website, it says “Rouge Valley: Getting it right for Canada's first National Urban Park”. It urges its supporters to ensure that the bill will put conservation values first, and they are not satisfied with the current state of Bill C-40.

I note also that it is a red herring to claim that we do not put out fires in national parks. The Gulf Islands National Park Reserve in my riding aggressively puts out forest fires. We only allow uncontrolled forest fires in national parks when they are fire-driven ecosystems, such as in the northern boreal, but not in the Gulf Islands and not in the Rouge.

Government Orders

Hon. Michael Chong: Mr. Speaker, I acknowledge the member's point about forest fires, but I would point out that we are at debate on second reading. This is about whether to send the bill to committee for further study and potential amendments. That is why I urge all members to support the bill at its first vote at second reading.

I would also add that the member opposite and I have long talked about this issue. She was in the government of Prime Minister Brian Mulroney as a staffer in the 1980s, working with the hon. Tom McMillan on this very file with the hon. Pauline Browes, so I welcome her interest in this file, and I encourage her to support it at second reading so that her concerns can be examined.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member's time has expired.

Before I give the floor to the hon. member for Drummond to resume debate, I must inform him that I will have to interrupt him at 2 p.m., when statements by members will begin.

The hon. member for Drummond has the floor.

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, from the outset I would like to mention that I will be sharing my time with someone yet to be determined.

Before I begin my speech, I would like to say something about this debate. I listened to all the speeches today, and some members have done an excellent job. I would like to say that I met with a number of environmental groups who spoke to me about the problem of ecological integrity in Rouge Park. They told me that it is very important to keep the concept of ecological integrity and to make exceptions that will make it possible to adapt the national park to urban realities. This would help maintain very high standards.

I would like to come back to the importance of parks and nature in Canada. The marvellous WWF Living Planet Report 2014 contains a truly important proverb that really puts everything in context: "We do not inherit the Earth from our ancestors; we borrow it from our children". That is really important. That concept must be part of our actions and our sustainable development. The future of my children and my grandchildren is one of the reasons why I entered politics. The report continues:

Yet...we are not proving good stewards of our only planet...The way we meet our needs today is compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs...

We must understand that if everyone on earth consumed resources like Canadians do at present, it would take more than three planets to meet our needs. We are mortgaging our children's future, which is really not a good thing. The report makes that clear.

I have met often with representatives from the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society. They said some key things about the importance of parks in Canada.

According to a federal government study from 2011, Canada's national parks support 33,000 jobs across the country, providing a stable, long-term economic base for rural and remote communities. The study also found that, for every federal dollar invested in national parks, more than \$6 goes back into the national GDP. Parks are therefore very important for our economy.

That brings us to the much talked about Rouge Park. A number of my colleagues expressed their concerns about the federal government's ability to ensure the ecological integrity and health of the park and the natural environment. Nature in this part of our country is actually very important.

I would like to come back to a report by the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development and a report by the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, which said that the federal government made major cuts in 2012, thereby reducing our scientific capacity to only one-third of what it was. If we have only one-third of our scientific capacity, we will have a hard time meeting the needs. In fact, according to the report of the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, "ecological integrity is a characteristic of healthy ecosystems".

That is very important and indeed it is set out in the National Parks Act. If we want Rouge Park to become a national park, it must have ecological integrity. It says so in the legislation.

The commissioner's 2013 fall report says:

...the Agency's governing legislation and policies specify that the "maintenance or restoration of ecological integrity, through the protection of natural resources and natural processes, shall be the first priority of the Minister when considering all aspects of the management of parks."

That is the law. The priority in the management of national parks is the maintenance and restoration of ecological integrity.

● (1350)

That has to be the priority for the Rouge national urban park. There can be adaptations in the future with exceptions for an urban park as needed. However, the basic principle of ecological integrity must be maintained.

I am a member of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, and several of my Conservative colleagues have said that they would never touch the ecological integrity of national parks. If that is so, then they should not start doing it here. This should be the priority, and new terms can be added to adapt later. I am very concerned about the federal government's approach to ecological integrity because the commissioner's report states:

We found that overall spending on Heritage Resources Conservation decreased by 15 percent in the 2012-13 fiscal year, compared with the average of the preceding six years, with further reductions planned [after that...]. The planned staffing numbers in Heritage Resources Conservation were reduced by 23 percent... More specifically, staffing in the science work stream [those involved in ecological integrity] was reduced by 33 percent during this period, as 60 of 179 positions were eliminated.

The federal government has everything it needs to protect the ecological integrity of the Rouge national urban park. That is why we completely disagree. We are very concerned about that possibility.

According to the Rouge national urban park bill, the minister is not required to consider ecosystem and wildlife health. He is not required to rehabilitate ecosystem health, just to consider it. What a joke. They cannot simply consider it; they have to implement strict rules.

Statements by Members

In conclusion, we will support this bill because it is important to move forward with the Rouge national urban park. People have been working on it for a long time, and it is really important. As a member of the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development, I will ensure that this bill is amended to make ecological integrity the priority.

I think it is a real shame that the Conservatives have started blaming the Ontario Liberal government for future inappropriate use of the park. On the contrary, they should be reaching out to the Government of Ontario and provincial governments. The Conservatives tend to be high and mighty with the provincial governments, telling them things will be done their way, period. What they should do is sit down and negotiate with them.

I find it unfortunate that a provincial government has come under attack in the House. Instead, the Conservative government should be working in partnership with the provincial governments and Rouge River advocacy groups. That is a real shame. That is why it will be much harder to work with the Government of Ontario, given the way it has been attacked here.

An NDP government will provide all of the necessary support to ensure that this park is protected so that we can preserve its biodiversity and help surrounding communities tap into the full economic and tourism potential that our national parks have to offer.

There is absolutely no doubt that creating parks will be one of our priorities when we form the government in 2015. At that time, we will ensure that ecological integrity is a priority, just as most environmental groups are calling for. Of course, there may be exceptions when it comes to urban parks such as the Rouge national urban park, for example.

• (1355)

[English]

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened quite closely to my hon. colleague and his eloquent remarks.

He spoke of research that shows humanity is living unsustainably. He spoke of the importance of intact ecosystems and he spoke of the lack of government resources, cuts to departmental budgets, and changes to environmental protections that have been made over the recent past.

He talked about the importance of an amendment to the bill, to the Rouge national urban park act, to focus on ecological integrity.

I am wondering if he could speak a little bit about why it is so important that we have that amendment to focus specifically on protecting ecological integrity.

[Translation]

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his excellent question.

All of the major environmental groups that are concerned about Rouge Park are saying that the focus should be on ecological integrity, or something along those lines, because recent cuts are a major source of concern.

The Conservatives have opened the door to commercializing our parks. We do not want that. We want parks to be open and accessible to everyone. National urban parks should be created so that as many people as possible can access them. This park should not be exclusively for the elite, nor should it be commercialized so that it becomes very expensive.

I hope that the Conservatives on the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development will be open to considering amendments that will improve the Rouge Park legislation.

• (1400)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Drummond will have three minutes to respond to questions and comments when the House resumes debate.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

IMMIGRANT ACHIEVEMENT

Mr. Jim Hillyer (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last night one of my staff, Colleen Valin, was honoured by the communities she serves, at the annual immigrant achievement awards. Remarkably, she is the first non-immigrant to receive the award, but organizers unanimously agreed that an exception should be made for Colleen.

Colleen is my chief of staff, and she acknowledges that this award honours the entire staff, who work together every day to help constituents dealing with life-changing difficulties and access vital government services. They understand that the work they do is not just an administrative job but that each file they help with represents a human being, a life.

A successful immigration story is not simply about one more person coming to Canada. In many cases it unites families long separated during some of the most difficult conditions in the world. That is why Colleen is often referred to as a beacon of hope by the people she assists.

I would like to thank all of my staff, who show that politics can really be about making the world a better place.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL SUMMIT OF COOPERATIVES

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canada will host the second edition of the International Summit of Cooperatives from October 6 to 9. More than 2,700 participants representing 93 countries will gather in Quebec City to discuss and share best practices and reflect on the challenges facing co-operatives and mutuals.

This summit shows the leadership of Canada's co-operative and mutualist sector. For several years, the gap between the rich and the poor has been growing, but our co-operatives are helping to build an economy that serves people, creating high-quality jobs and providing services that meet the real needs of our communities.

Statements by Members

I invite all of my colleagues to celebrate the start of the summit, as well as Co-op Week, which will be held from October 13 to 19. Our co-operatives are essential to keeping our economy sustainable, democratic and 100% Canadian.

* * *

[English]

LES FEUX FOLLETS

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to stand in the House today and speak about the contribution made to Canada by Michel Cartier, founder of Les Feux Follets.

Fifty years ago this month, Les Feux Follets performed before Queen Elizabeth II to open the brand new Confederation Centre of the Arts in Charlottetown. Les Feux Follets has been called Canada's national folk ensemble, an instrument of national unity.

Throughout the sixties, Michel Cartier and his Les Feux Follets represented Canada and Quebec as cultural ambassadors in three European tours, four national and North American tours, and three command performances before Queen Elizabeth.

Cartier's vision for an act that captured the lore of first nations communities, the arrival of European settlers, and the Quebec and Acadian influence on our country lives on in Charlottetown with the popular Young Company production of *We Are Canadian*.

While Michel Cartier felt his task was interpreting Canada to the world, he also successfully interpreted Canada to Canadians.

Please join me in celebrating an important piece of Canadian history.

* * *

WES THOMPSON

Mr. Dave Van Kesteren (Chatham-Kent—Essex, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on September 22, 2014, we were saddened by the passing of Wes Thompson in his 88th year.

Wes became president of W.G. Thompson & Sons at the age of 24, where he served until his retirement in 1993. Under his leadership, the company expanded to 17 locations in Canada and the United States.

He was past president of the Ridgeway Campus Agricultural Committee, past member of the Royal Agricultural Fair board, past president of the Ontario Grain & Feed Dealers Association, and past president of the grain sector of the Ontario Grain & Feed Dealers Association, to name a few of his accomplishments.

Wes was a founding trustee and a past director of the Chatham-Kent Health Alliance and Public General Hospital Foundation.

In 1999, Wes was named agriculturalist of the year and inducted into the Kent County Agricultural Hall of Fame as well as being named citizen of the year in 2002 by the Blenheim & District Chamber of Commerce.

To his wife Patricia and to his family we offer our sincere condolences as well as our deepest appreciation for his life and his many contributions to our community.

HARVEST

Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to take a moment to recognize that with the changing leaves and the crisp morning air, we are approaching the end of harvest.

Harvest is a significant time of year for our farmers because it is the culmination of their hard work. After months of planning, prepping, seeding, fertilizing, and spraying, harvest is the end result.

It is a stressful time for many, as they have a relatively short window of time to get the crop off the field and into the bins. This means waiting for the right weather conditions, making sure the crop is at the right moisture level, and putting in endless hours to get the job done.

In particular, I would like to recognize Leonard and Leona Smyl, who were recently acknowledged for their farming excellence, as well as David and Sharon Boorse, who were awarded the Alberta Century Farm and Ranch Award for farming the same land for 100 years, and Raymond and Candice Phillips of Beauvallon. It is producers like these who constitute the backbone of this country.

I would like to thank all the farmers in the Lakeland region and all of Alberta for their hard work and steadfastness.

God bless.

* * *

● (1405)

CLIMATEFAST

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today the closing ceremonies of the third annual ClimateFast action are happening here on Parliament Hill. Participants from across Canada have been fasting each Monday to draw attention to the urgent need for action on climate change and began a sustained fast on Sunday.

These dedicated activists are calling for an end to fossil fuel subsidies, a price on carbon, and support for the development of a renewable energy plan for Canada. New Democrats support these goals and have put forward the climate change accountability act to help us meet them. Sadly, governments past and present have utterly failed to address the challenge that climate change presents. Their negligence has put our country at serious risk and has kept us on the outside of the green economy of the 21st century.

I commend the ClimateFast participants for their ongoing work on climate justice, and I call on the other parties in the House to follow their courageous lead and help us build a prosperous and sustainable Canada.

40TH WEDDING ANNIVERSARY

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I pay tribute to a vibrant, selfless woman with whom I am blessed to be sharing my life as a partner, confidant, and husband. From earliest anxious days in constructing our climb to success, then ever increasingly being propelled through life's twists and turns to countless exhilarating heights, temporal regrets are so few.

Some 19 years have flown by as partners serving as one for our Queen, our country, and the unity of Canada. Most memorable, though, in our journey to this day are the births of daughters Corinna and Kristina, the growth of our family with son Tom, and granddaughters Katelin, Alexandra, and Eleanor, whom we cherish so.

On this, the 40th year of our voyage together through life, I again proclaim my enduring devotion and love to my wife, Lorraine.

To quote T. Tolis, "To love is nothing. To be loved is something. But to love and be loved, that's everything!"

* * *

NEW DEMOCRATIC PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have here the top ten reasons the New Democrats will not agree to the new memberships for standing committees.

Number ten is that they worked long hours this spring, so they are going to take easy this fall and knock off on this extra committee work.

Number nine is that they think that the chair of the procedure and House affairs committee could be even nicer.

Number eight is that they just hate change. After 50 years, they still call themselves "new".

Number seven is that they want to keep a committee seat open for Olivia Chow.

Number six is that they like messing with Kady O'Malley's head.

Number five is that their whip is still trying to find an MP who understands finance to sit on the finance committee.

Number four is that caucus members getting a new assignment just do not think it is a fair trade.

Number three is that facing invoices to reimburse the House more than \$1 million, the NDP MPs are now working to rule.

Number two is a lack of interest from their members. If their whip will not let committees travel, why sit on one?

The number one reason the New Democrats will not agree to the new membership changes for the standing committees is that their leader is really just an angry guy.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

SHIPBUILDING

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the day before yesterday, the Quebec National Assembly unanimously adopted a motion calling on the federal government to give work—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. It is impolite for hon. members to keep talking when the hon. member for Louis-Hébert has the floor.

Mr. Denis Blanchette: Mr. Speaker, the day before yesterday, the Quebec National Assembly unanimously adopted a motion calling on the federal government to give work to the Davie shipyard.

As we know, this Quebec shipyard, which is located in the Minister of Public Safety's riding, was abandoned by the Conservatives. It has not received any contracts or any of the \$33 billion in federal funding.

As far back as 2011, we said that no one needed to be the loser. If this government claims to listen to Quebecers, it cannot disregard a unanimous resolution—I repeat, unanimous—of the Quebec National Assembly, as it so often does.

Therefore, I ask the government, specifically the hon. member for Lévis—Bellechasse and Minister of Public Safety, to consider the motion by the Quebec National Assembly and tell us what they plan to do, because the Davie shipyard is ready now to work on contracts that will help Canada.

* * *

● (1410)

[English]

TERRORISM

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today terrorism is a frightening reality. That is why our Conservative government is taking strong measures, which include tools to strip citizenship from convicted terrorists.

Despite the fact that more than 83% of Canadians support this measure, including those who identify themselves as NDP or Liberal supporters, both the Liberals and NDP shamelessly oppose it.

Furthermore, the leader of the Liberal Party has said that taking passports away from terrorists is an affront to Canadian values. This shockingly naive comment is from the same leader who said that the Boston bombing was caused by feelings of exclusion.

We on this side of the House are clear: terrorism is an evil action that must be stopped. The Liberal Party is simply ignorant of the true threat that terrorism poses. The Liberals are clearly in over their heads.

Statements by Members

[Translation]

LAKE SAINT-PIERRE AREA OF PRIME CONCERN COMMITTEE

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud to rise today to recognize the contribution of the Lake Saint-Pierre area of prime concern committee, or ZIP committee, to environmental protection. On September 18, that organization was at the National Assembly accepting the Phoenix Award, Quebec's most prestigious environmental award.

The ZIP committee earned the award in the “non-profit organizations, non-educational institutions, research centres or associations” for its Protection project and the development of the Saint-Eugène marsh.

I want to congratulate the ZIP committee on the excellent work it does. Protecting the environment is a critical issue for everyone in the NDP.

The Saint-Eugène marsh is a valuable natural landscape in Trois-Rivières. To revitalize this wetland, the ZIP committee coordinated the reflooding and recreational development of the area and worked to increase public awareness among users.

Once again, thank you very much and congratulations to the ZIP committee.

* * *

[English]

REGISTERED DISABILITY SAVINGS PLAN

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the strong leadership of the Prime Minister and Jim Flaherty, our government introduced the registered disability savings plan in 2007.

This is the first plan of its kind in the world that assists Canadians with disabilities, and their families, in saving for the long term. It is too bad that the opposition parties opposed creating this historic program to help families.

Raising awareness about this important plan, along with the many other savings vehicles available for families to save for their future, is absolutely crucial. That is why I would like to acknowledge the B. C. government's proclamation of October as RDSP Awareness Month, and I encourage all members to continue to highlight its importance with their constituents.

Thanks to smart, innovative Conservative initiatives such as the RDSP, Canadians living with disabilities can be sure that our government will continue supporting them and that Jim's legacy will live on.

* * *

MEMBER FOR WESTMOUNT—VILLE-MARIE

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today I rise to pay tribute to an inspiring Canadian who has helped to establish Canada as an innovative leader, both here at home and well beyond our borders.

Thirty years ago this week, the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie made all of us proud as he became the first Canadian to view his home from space.

Of course, this was just one of many achievements for this navy captain, former president of the Canadian Space Agency, and now elected member of this House, but it was an achievement that put Canadian technical expertise on the map.

In the three decades since his first trip to space, the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie has accomplished more than most, but perhaps most notably he has worked to help Canada reach its full potential.

Many theorize that the sky is the limit for those who are not afraid to fly, but the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie has proven this to all Canadians.

I am proud to sit as his colleague. On behalf of all Canadians, I offer my thanks and congratulations for a lifetime of service and achievement.

* * *

●(1415)

RETAIL SECTOR

Mr. Andrew Saxton (North Vancouver, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, I rise in the House to recognize the hard work and contributions of Canada's huge retail sector.

Canadian retail represents more than two million jobs in every community across this country and half a trillion dollars in sales each year.

The Retail Council of Canada, which is on the Hill today, represents 45,000 storefronts of all formats, from specialty stores to discount stores, from independent shops to online merchants. They are a critical support for the retailers that benefit from their expertise in leading-edge issues facing the industry.

This includes sharing with their members new programs that leverage sales through measuring store traffic and fostering best practices to protect stores and their customers.

Let us not forget how many young Canadians get their start in retail. I worked at a department store when I was in my twenties, and it is there that I learned skills that stand me in good stead to this day.

There is not a member in this House whose constituency is untouched by Canadian retail.

On behalf of all of us, I would like to recognize the importance of the retail industry and welcome its members to Parliament Hill.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Veterans Affairs tabled a disappointing response to a unanimous report on the new veterans charter. We heard from 54 witnesses over 14 meetings, and our report had the unanimous support of all committee members, including Conservatives, yet the minister is rejecting this report and saying no to any recommendations that cost any money.

A good example is recommendation no. 5, which states, “That all veterans with service-related disabilities, and their families, be entitled to the same benefits and support...”, yet the minister disagreed with this recommendation. This is the same department that has let over \$1 billion in veterans funding lapse since the Conservatives formed government.

With Conservatives poised to deploy Canadian Forces into a war zone, it is time for the Conservatives to stop focusing on photo ops and PR and start focusing on giving veterans the support they need.

* * *

CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have known for years that the NDP bows to the will of their big union bosses and their illegal political sponsorships. Earlier this month, however, some big union bosses announced they would supporting the Liberal Party rather than their fellow travellers in the NDP.

It did not take the Liberal Party very long to start following its new union bosses' instructions. Earlier this week, the member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville was advertised on the Public Service Alliance of Canada's Twitter account, gleefully holding the childish Brigitte DePape stop sign.

Unlike the Liberals, whose only idea is to legalize drugs, on this side of the House we stand up for Canadian taxpayers' interests. This government lowers Canadians' taxes, balances budgets, and puts money back in the pockets of hard-working Canadians, and we will continue to stand up for them day in and day out.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

HEALTH

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Ebola virus vaccine, manufactured here in Canada, was supposed to have been sent to Africa seven weeks ago. These thousands of doses are still here and have not been sent out.

Can the government tell us why there is a delay with the delivery of a medication manufactured here in Canada that could save thousands of lives?

[English]

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the vaccines are actually available to go at a moment's notice. It is the World Health Organization that is coordinating the logistics for the vaccine, but we are ready to act as soon as it pulls that trigger.

As members know, we are taking this seriously. We have invested \$35 million in the response to the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. We are a global leader. We are providing funds, we are providing expertise, and we are providing equipment.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to a journal of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, that might not be the only reason.

Oral Questions

It reports that African trials of this Canadian vaccine have in fact been delayed, not because of logistical problems but over an intellectual property dispute. The company that owns the commercial licence for the drug is said to be dragging its feet.

With thousands of lives at risk, can the Minister of Health explain what Canada is doing to ensure this vaccine gets to the people who need it immediately?

● (1420)

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has been very generous in our response to this terrible outbreak of Ebola in West Africa. We have donated 800 to 1,000 doses of this vaccine, and it is up to the World Health Organization to organize the logistics in dispensing these vaccines.

We are also contributing expertise on the ground when it comes to the mobile lab and the revolving scientists who are out there staffing that. We have funded \$35 million to leading international partners like the Red Cross, Médecins Sans Frontières and—

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when, exactly, did members of the Canadian military arrive in Iraq? On what date? RDI has alleged that the first members of the Canadian military did not arrive in Iraq until last Saturday, September 27. Is that true? We want the exact date.

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister has indicated, we have authorized up to 69 members of the forces for this campaign. We have indicated as well that there are 26 on the ground. They come and go according to the command structure on the ground, but they are there for strategic advice and that is the role they are playing.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what the Prime Minister indicated is that they were on the ground in Iraq on September 15. At the very least, this is duplicitous. Will the Prime Minister explain why he has been misleading Parliament?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely ridiculous.

We have been forthcoming about this force. We have indicated that there are 69 to provide strategic and tactical advice. Again, this is in co-operation with our allies and with Iraq, and that is exactly what we have done for this last period of time.

Oral Questions

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, can the Prime Minister understand that this is why Canadians do not trust the government on this important question? There is nothing more important that this Parliament decides than whether or not we send our brave women and men to war, and we cannot even get a straight answer. That is the problem with the government. When will it start giving clear answers to Canadians?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is duplicitous is the Leader of the Opposition suggesting or implying that he might ever support any of these missions. We know that is not going to happen.

That being said, we have a role for the Canadian Armed Forces who have been deployed in that area. It is very specific. It is to provide strategic and tactical advice. That is exactly what they have done. We should be proud of that, and the NDP should be supportive of that effort.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is the Prime Minister's job to engage Parliament and Canadians and make the case for the use of the Canadian Armed Forces; and he has completely failed to do so. Canadians know virtually nothing about this initial 30-day deployment in Iraq and even less about the Prime Minister's plans for a combat role.

Does the Prime Minister actually expect Canadians and this House to support a new mission if he continues his secrecy and evasiveness about the missions in which we are already involved?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there has been a debate in this House; the Minister of Foreign Affairs and I have been before the parliamentary committee to talk about this mission; we have answered questions here in Parliament. I think what the hon. member is referring to about "no consultations" is that when her party was in office it did not bring these matters before Parliament. However, we have been very specific on our role in this matter.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is the minister who just yesterday said that the military budget had not been cut, but in fact the record shows it was cut by \$413 million this year.

We are just hours away from the end of the 30-day deployment in Iraq. Beyond broad statements about training and advice, we have actually no idea what the troops are doing on the ground. The only information we get is what the government leaks to the media or the Prime Minister announces in New York.

Why does the government refuse to answer the most basic questions about our critical military role in Iraq? How can the current government be trusted?

• (1425)

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been clear that they are there to provide advice to the government of Iraq and the forces on the ground, and we have been very specific on this all the way through this. We have indicated that we have up to 69 members of the armed forces who can be and would be available when and where they are needed. We have been very specific on that.

However, I have to point out for the hon. member that the decade of darkness under the Liberals is over. We have increased military spending from \$13 billion when we took office to over \$18 billion. That is the difference between them and us.

[Translation]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, rather than speaking directly to Canadians about Iraq, the Prime Minister instead chose to make speeches in New York and speak to the American media.

Rather than openly making his case, the Prime Minister is dealing with this issue the same way he has dealt with every issue in what will soon be nine years, namely in a partisan and secretive way.

What criteria did the government use to determine that a series of air strikes was the best contribution that Canada could make to this conflict?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would be very interested to hear exactly where the Liberal Party stands. It has had about three different positions on this over the last number of weeks, so it would be fascinating to hear where it lands on this.

However, we have been very clear. This is a 30-day mission in which we are providing advice. We have received a request from the United States for further involvement, and we are considering that.

* * *

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister is ignoring the needs of the victims of the Islamic State armed group. I would like to quote a United Nations report dated September 14, which reads:

Displaced persons included thousands of women, children, people with disabilities, and elderly. They had travelled long distances on foot and were in urgent need of humanitarian assistance, including water, food, shelter and medicine.

While the Prime Minister is preparing to introduce his war plan, where is the plan to provide immediate assistance to Iraqi civilians?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of International Development and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, not only is there a plan, but it has been executed.

Canada is one of the biggest contributors to Iraq and one of the most active countries. Through Canada's contribution, the most desperate people and those in need will be able to receive food, kitchen utensils, cooking equipment, bedding, medical supplies and other essentials. That is what they need and we are giving it to them right now.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the number of human rights violations committed by the Islamic State group is growing.

According to the United Nations, these could include war crimes and crimes against humanity. The Iraqi government needs immediate help to document these heinous crimes so that the guilty parties can be brought to justice before the international courts.

Canada has expertise in this area. A month ago, at our request, the minister promised to take action to support the Iraqi government.

What has been done since then?

[*English*]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, ISIL is a terrorist group that brutalizes and murders innocent people. That is why we are in this mission right now.

That is why we are contemplating another mission in that part of the world, and the members opposite should support us on these missions.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this new United Nations report documents a horrific pattern of sexual violence against women and children, including the sale of abducted women in Mosul.

These crimes are abhorrent, and Canada has the obligation and expertise to assist survivors.

It has been nearly a month since I asked the minister to help address sexual violence in Iraq. He agreed then, so where is the plan to provide help for these civilians right now? Where is that help?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the whole idea of the mission with which we are involved and the consideration of the request that we received is to go after the perpetrators of these crimes.

I do not know what it is about New Democrats that they do not get that.

• (1430)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): It is very simple, Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Ottawa Centre now has the floor.

Order, please. I have great confidence that the Minister of National Defence will be happy to answer the question. I think his colleagues should give him that opportunity and let the member for Ottawa Centre ask the question.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Speaker, a combat mission will not bring justice or aid to these civilians, but we can help do that right now.

The United Nations has said that actions of ISIL amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. It has asked for countries to help ensure that perpetrators are held to account.

Again, Canada has the expertise to do that. Again, the minister agreed. Where is the action to help investigate and prosecute these horrific war crimes?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the action is to stop the killing, and this is why we are on the ground now, providing tactical advice to the Iraqis to make sure they have the ability to stop this kind of activity.

That is exactly why we are considering the request from our allies, because when it comes to standing up for people who are oppressed, people who are terrorized in this world, they know they can count on Canada.

Oral Questions

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. We are losing a great deal of time on this. Order, please.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as they prepare to launch into another war, Conservatives are still failing to care for veterans who have served our country.

All parties unanimously back recommendations to fix the Conservatives' deeply flawed veterans charter, but the minister has refused to act on key recommendations. It seems that saving money is more important than fairness for disabled veterans or helping men and women struggling with post-traumatic stress.

Will the minister commit to the unanimous all-party recommendations to help our veterans?

Mr. Parm Gill (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, first I would like to thank the member and the opposition parties for working in a non-partisan fashion to produce a unanimous report.

Let us not forget that all sides agree that the new veterans charter is a great foundation upon which we can support Canadian veterans.

While benefits and investments in veterans' well-being have increased by more than \$4.7 billion since 2006, our government agrees with the spirit and intent of the vast majority of the committee's recommendations.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives want to involve us in another war even though they find it difficult to provide proper care for our injured soldiers and our veterans. That is completely irresponsible.

The government has finally recognized that its veterans charter does not meet the needs of our veterans, but it refuses to take action. The compensation is inadequate and the problem of our released soldiers who suffer from post-traumatic stress syndrome has not been resolved in any way.

Why is the minister once again trying to save money at the expense of our veterans?

[*English*]

Mr. Parm Gill (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would encourage the member opposite to put those political games aside. As I just noted, the government agrees with the vast majority of the committee's recommendations.

Oral Questions

Because of the leadership of our Prime Minister, our government will continue to build upon our strong record of new investment to support Canada's veterans.

We have invested almost \$5 billion in additional dollars since taking office. It is the NDP and the Liberal Party that have voted against virtually every mission that we have been brought forward.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, these are men and women who risk life and limb to serve our country. They deserve our respect and our support, yet the minister rejected virtually every recommendation that could cost the government money.

The Conservative government seems only too willing to allow our veterans to fend for themselves once they become injured. Will the minister commit to spending the money needed to improve the lives of our veterans?

• (1435)

Mr. Parm Gill (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has a strong record when it comes to supporting Canada's veterans, our men and women in uniform, unlike the Liberals' decades of darkness.

Let me read a quote from the Conference of Defence Associations, which represents 51 associations across Canada. It says it, "is very pleased that action will be taken, in the first stage, to immediately address important issues affecting Veterans who are seriously ill or critically injured, and their families".

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives are back at it, fighting a Federal Court ruling that struck down what the court called "cruel and unusual cuts" to refugee health care. The court said that these cuts jeopardized the lives of children in a manner "that shocks the conscience and outrages our standards of decency." This is a recurrent theme for the government.

This is about saving the lives of kids. This is about providing prenatal care for women. This is about our shared values.

Will the government do the right thing and drop this court challenge?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the moment this flawed decision was announced, we announced our intention to appeal. That is exactly what we have done. We have filed our notice to appeal. We will be aggressively defending the needs of genuine refugees, as well as the interests of Canadian taxpayers.

What we will not do in the Federal Court is argue, like the NDP, why it should not have to pay back taxpayers for money it stole.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, although the Federal Court clearly ruled that restricting access to health care for certain refugees constitutes cruel and unusual punishment, the government has decided to appeal. There is no credible legal basis for the appeal. The only thing the Conservatives

are interested in is saving money at the expense of refugees. Instead of waging this legal battle, why does the minister not assume his responsibilities with respect to refugees and their children who need health care?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when the court's decision was announced this summer, we announced our intention to appeal. That is exactly what we have done. We will continue to protect the interests of and maintain protections for genuine refugees, as well as defending the interests of Canadian taxpayers. What we will not be doing in Federal Court, unlike the NDP, is defending our right to steal money from Canadian taxpayers.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

[*English*]

The Speaker: I will address that after question period.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on Saturday, Canada's initial 30-day non-combat mission in Iraq in the struggle against the evil of ISIL will end.

Tomorrow the Prime Minister will announce that he is sending Canadians into combat. The lives of CF-18 fighter pilots will be on the line. They, their families, and all Canadians need to understand the government's calculation.

To start with, what were the Prime Minister's objectives in that first 30-day non-combat mission? Were those objectives accomplished, and how?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has been very clear about our objective, which is to provide strategic advice to the Iraqi forces that are fighting ISIL.

However, we take no lessons from the Liberal Party. It consulted no one on Iraq or Afghanistan. We have committed to do exactly that, if we move forward.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, these are life and death issues. Canadians are going to war. It is not good enough for the government to say "Just get on board." Consensus requires clear, honest, complete, and factual—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. If members need to carry on conversations, I would ask them to do so outside the chamber, but not while their colleagues are putting and answering questions.

The hon. member for Wascana.

Hon. Ralph Goodale: Mr. Speaker, consensus requires clear, honest, complete, and factual answers. It would appear that the prime ministers of the United Kingdom and Australia worked really hard at building trust and common ground in their countries, but that has not happened, at least not yet, in Canada.

In making its case, why does the government think it is better to drive wedges of division and keep Canadians in the dark?

Oral Questions

●(1440)

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, these consultations and consensus that the member is talking about were never undertaken by the Liberals when they were in office, not at all. We have changed that. Whether it be Libya or Afghanistan, we have brought motions before Parliament, and the Prime Minister has indicated that any future combat mission will be brought before Parliament for a vote.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Chrétien had enormous support.

Canadians need to know whether the government has thought through the combat mission that it is launching.

In rooting out the evil of ISIL, how have the Conservatives calculated that the highest and best use of Canadian resources is a small fleet of CF-18s? What about those other alternatives: strategic airlift, training, signals intelligence, reconnaissance, medical support as well as the massive humanitarian relief that is required?

The cost of the air strikes will crowd out all those other things in which Canadians excel. Therefore, what is the rationale for the choice that is being made to the exclusion of everything else?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member said that there was huge support under a Liberal government. I do not know how we would know that since the Liberals never brought the matter before Parliament.

The member wants to know what the objective is. The objective is to go against ISIL and stop the murderous activities that it has been involved with in that part of the world. That is what we are doing on the ground now giving advice to the Iraqis, and those are the considerations we will take forward.

* * *

[Translation]

EMPLOYMENT

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, seafood companies in Prince Edward Island are pointing at inconsistencies in the minister's statistics on temporary foreign workers. According to those statistics, in January, there were 180 foreign workers in the seafood sector.

However, there is a slight disconnect: in January, plants are closed.

If the minister's data are systematically being questioned on the ground, how can the minister still claim that his reform is credible?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the hon. member is mistaken again. Temporary foreign workers are allowed to work during all seasons of the year.

The information released by my department is accurate: according to the numbers, there are more EI recipients than temporary foreign workers in the fish processing industry.

This means that the industry has no labour shortage. That is one of the reasons why we reformed the program.

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister's bungling is irritating both the provinces and employers. Jobs in seafood processing companies are vulnerable because of the minister's statistical errors. The truth is that the minister and his reform of the temporary foreign worker program have absolutely no credibility. More than ever, this boondoggle needs to be reviewed independently.

Will he launch an independent inquiry?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the inconsistency of the NDP on this issue is incredible.

In the spring, they voted in favour of a full moratorium on the temporary foreign worker program for low-skilled jobs. Now they are saying that we must let temporary foreign workers into the fish processing industry, where there are more EI recipients. That makes no sense. Is the NDP in favour of reducing or expanding the program?

[English]

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it appears the minister's ability to collect bad data is boundless.

First it was labour market statistics off Kijiji. Then it was a list of employers that did not correspond to reality. Now the P.E.I. seafood processors are complaining about the minister's numbers. The minister claims 180 foreign workers were processing seafood in January, a month when seafood processing plants are not even open.

This confirms we need an independent review. When will the minister finally call one?

●(1445)

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, regrettably, the member does not apparently have a clue what she is talking about. As the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans confirms, who is an MP from the Island, its operation is year round. There are temporary foreign workers authorized to work there year round.

Let us be clear. The NDP wanted us to completely shut down all aspects of the low-skilled temporary foreign worker program. Instead, we made it a last and limited resort to ensure that Canadians would come first. In that industry, we find there are more people receiving EI who have done fish processing work in that place than there are temporary foreign workers, which is counter-indicative of a labour shortage. The NDP should not be standing up to have foreign workers replace Canadians.

Oral Questions

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, if I remember rightly, it was the minister who called a moratorium when McDonald's was exposed. That is what happened.

The seafood processors are not alone in complaining about the minister's bad data, and we are talking about bad data. Siemens is asking the government to officially retract the list of employers it released because it miscalculated the number of foreign workers employed by Siemens by over 2,000.

How can Canadians trust the Conservatives when all of their decisions are based on such bad numbers? Simply promising to count better in the future is not enough. Will the minister finally call an independent review?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the data set to which she refers is based on numbers supplied by employers.

It was the NDP that brought forward a motion to this place in the spring for a complete ban on all low-skilled temporary foreign workers, including those in the fish processing industry, supported by the Liberals.

Now we have clear evidence, brought forward by officials in my ministry, that there are in some industries more people receiving employment insurance benefits in proximity to jobs that are being filled by temporary foreign workers. Only the NDP could think it makes any sense to give people a benefit not to work and to bring people in from half way across the world to do—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Saskatoon—Humboldt.

* * *

NATURAL RESOURCES

Mr. Brad Trost (Saskatoon—Humboldt, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government's responsible resource development plan is creating jobs and growing the economy, while ensuring Canada has strong environmental protection.

Today is a very exciting day in my home province of Saskatchewan, as Canada demonstrates to the world how we are leading on carbon capture and storage technologies.

Could the parliamentary secretary share with the House how the government's support has made the Boundary Dam project possible?

Mrs. Kelly Block (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is indeed an exciting day for Canada and Saskatchewan. Boundary Dam is the world's first post-combustion carbon capture project in a coal-fired plant. It will significantly reduce emissions. In fact, representatives from nearly 20 countries have travelled to Saskatchewan for the announcement of this state-of-the-art technology.

Our government is proud to support made-in-Canada solutions that create jobs and protect our environment.

[*Translation*]

HEALTH

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, two months ago the government announced that it would provide Africa with 1,000 doses of vaccine. That vaccine is still in Winnipeg.

While the Ebola virus is spreading rapidly, the Public Health Agency is saying that the delay is due to logistical problems because the vaccine has to be refrigerated.

If I understand correctly, the Americans are sending planes to Liberia every day, but we are unable to send a cooler. That is ridiculous.

Why has Canada not delivered on its promise to send the vaccines to Africa?

[*English*]

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have indicated, the vaccines are available. They have been made available to the World Health Organization and it is the World Health Organization that takes the leadership role on organizing these logistics. As soon as the World Health Organization would like to pull the trigger, we are ready to ship the vaccines.

However, we are not stopping there. We are providing \$35 million to help those most affected by Ebola, to curb the spread of Ebola, to provide basic nutrition to people who are suffering and to provide medical equipment in place. We are showing global leadership in the response to Ebola.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary has just confirmed again that this urgently needed vaccine is still sitting in a Winnipeg lab, despite the promises that were made weeks ago to get a vaccine to West Africa. In the meantime, the number of Ebola cases is doubling almost every three weeks.

Rather than passing the buck and trying to blame someone else, we want to know, and can the minister tell us, what steps she is taking now to deliver on Canada's promise for this vaccine.

• (1450)

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, everybody understands that the vaccines need to get to the people most affected, but there are logistical issues. In fact, the World Health Organization, in discussions with our chief medical officer, ascertains that consent needs to be provided. Obtaining this consent is an issue. Ensuring that the vaccines are refrigerated is an issue.

What I can assure the House is that we have donated 800 to 1,000 doses of this vaccine. It is being made available. As soon as the World Health Organization can make use of it, we will ship it.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I can say that Canadians expect their government to be proactive, not sitting around waiting.

Oral Questions

Let us look at drug safety. While the U.S. takes drug safety seriously, this minister has been improvising. Five months ago, the U.S. banned imports from Apotex. Health Canada politely asked Apotex to stop and did nothing when it refused. This week Conservatives finally imposed a ban, but then they got the product list wrong.

Can the minister confirm that she was told about the problems with Apotex in April and did nothing, or is she suggesting that she is not responsible for her own department?

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we will not tolerate drug safety risks. As soon as Health Canada was made aware of the issues at the plants in India, it acted immediately. A quarantine was put in place. All of the medications were reviewed, and now there is an import ban against these medications.

Vanessa's law will allow Health Canada to enact tough new fines for companies that put any Canadian lives at risk. It will also allow Health Canada to not have to negotiate with pharmaceutical companies but to simply ban them.

[Translation]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is absolutely not true because despite all the warnings the FDA sent Canada, the Minister of Health refused to do anything about the quality of drugs distributed in Canada. Only after months of waiting and dozens of our questions did the minister finally wake up and ban the import of potentially dangerous drugs.

Nevertheless, there is still one more step to take. When will the minister impose a mandatory recall of Apotex products?

[English]

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I indicated, in fact there is a full import ban on all drugs coming from these facilities. These drugs are not entering Canada. We will make considerations if there is some life-saving drug there and there is no other drug available in Canada, but at this point, there is no such need.

It is Vanessa's Law, which is currently going through the Senate, that will provide Health Canada with the mandatory recall powers it needs. It will also allow Health Canada to insist on large, hefty fines against pharmaceutical firms. We prioritize Canadians' health safety.

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have failed to live up to their commitment, made weeks ago, to send personal protective equipment to help fight the Ebola outbreak. Supplies have yet to leave this country. Since August, the number of Ebola cases and deaths in West Africa has tripled.

What steps is Canada taking, including working with other countries, to ensure immediate delivery of the supplies to those in need in West Africa?

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are examining our options to deliver this equipment as quickly and as efficiently as possible. We have been doing quite a bit actually, and we are a global leader when it comes to the response on Ebola.

As I have indicated, we are providing \$35 million to the Red Cross, to the World Health Organization, and to Médecins Sans Frontières. These folks have the capacity on the ground to assist. We are providing basic nutritional assistance. We are providing scientific assistance. We are doing as much as we possibly can to help, and we are always looking to see what we can do.

[Translation]

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Ebola virus continues to wreak havoc in West Africa day after day. Canada promised to send medical supplies. Those supplies are still here. Why?

Now that the virus is at our door, Canadians are worried. Of the five labs that are designated to screen for Ebola, only the lab in Quebec is in operation. How do the Conservatives explain their lax attitude when human lives are at stake?

• (1455)

[English]

Ms. Eve Adams (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the chief medical officer indicated yesterday and the Public Health Agency has been saying now for some time, and this has been verified by the World Health Organization, the risk to Canadians from Ebola is very low.

I do not think this is an issue that we want to fearmonger with. We are providing \$35 million in assistance. We have generously donated \$2.5 million in equipment. We are showing international leadership on this file.

* * *

FISHERIES AND OCEANS

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, for 15 years, a moratorium on mussel aquaculture in Malpeque Bay has protected local fisheries, but now the Conservatives are considering scrapping the protection, even though the concerns have not been addressed. Serious safety issues have not been resolved, and the unregulated use of lime poses a risk to the ecosystem and to lobster stocks.

My question for the minister is this: will she maintain the moratorium on mussel farms to protect the local ecosystem and local fisheries?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the expansion of mussel leases in Malpeque Bay, there has been no decision, but I can say that science will guide that decision, along with consultations with stakeholders.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the situation is critical in the Gaspé rivers. Fewer and fewer salmon are swimming upstream. This year, there was a drop of over 60%, including in the York and St. John rivers. This has not happened in 30 years, according to the managers. We have to find out what is happening.

Does the government plan to investigate?

[English]

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Yes, Mr. Speaker, certainly our officials are investigating.

I share the concerns of my colleague with regard to the exceptionally low runs of Atlantic salmon, but we are doing a lot of things, a lot of management measures, because conservation is the number one priority of our government.

Along with things that have been identified, such as conservation and protection, I can assure the hon. member that in 2013 alone, there were almost 65,000 hours dedicated to the monitoring and enforcement of Atlantic salmon throughout Atlantic Canada.

* * *

FOREIGN INVESTMENT

Mr. David Sweet (Ancaster—Dundas—Flamborough—Westdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is open to investment that creates jobs, growth, and long-term prosperity for all Canadians. Since taking office, our government has reduced Canada's tax rate on new business investment, making us the lowest in the G7. In fact, a recent United Nations report showed that among developed countries, Canada is second only to the United States in attracting foreign investment.

Can the Minister of Industry please update the House on what our government is doing to encourage foreign investment in Canada?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, for Canadian businesses to grow and create jobs here at home, of course we have to attract investment into Canada. The World Economic Forum has reported that for seven straight years now, we have had the soundest banking system in all the world. KPMG has reported that we have the most tax-competitive economy in all the world. On the tax side, we have a 13% lower corporate tax rate than the United States.

On foreign investment, it was reported just yesterday, in fact, that we are attracting more money than ever before, \$686 billion into the Canadian economy, and since we formed government in 2006, we have seen an increase in foreign investment into the Canadian economy of 57%, creating jobs in every region of Canada.

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Hon. Mark Eyking (Sydney—Victoria, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, our trade of fresh produce with the United States is worth \$1.6 billion. It is critical for our farmers and our consumers alike. The Conservatives have already failed with the country of origin labelling with the United States, and it is costing our livestock industry billions.

The U.S. has been warning Canada that it will lose special privileges in trading our fresh produce if Canada does not treat it equally. Today it has been revealed that we are no longer protected under the perishable commodities act.

Why did the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food let this happen, and what is he going to do to fix it?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is, in fact, not the case.

We have been doing consultations over the course of the summer. I have met with the fresh food producers out in British Columbia and here in Ottawa as well, and we are going to be reporting back to the House. In my department we are working on solutions to move forward to ensure that fresh food producers in this country have the policies they need to succeed and grow.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the national pollutant release inventory tracks Canada's polluters. In Beauport—Limoilou, the facilities identified include everything from the Quebec City waste incinerator to the White Birch Paper mill in Stadacona.

Oddly enough, one facility is notably absent: Quebec Stevedoring, which is responsible for the transshipment of millions of tonnes of bulk cargo every month, including nickel. Can the Minister of the Environment explain why Quebec Stevedoring is not included in the national pollutant release inventory?

● (1500)

[English]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will take that question under advisement and get back to the member.

* * *

[Translation]

LABOUR

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in violation of provincial labour codes, many businesses are exploiting unpaid interns. It is appalling.

However, the situation is even worse for interns working in areas under federal jurisdiction. They have no protection, not even against sexual harassment.

Will the Conservatives support my private member's bill to provide minimum protections to interns working in federally regulated businesses?

Point of Order

[English]

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Labour and for Western Economic Diversification, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government believes in safe, productive workplaces. If anyone believes their rights have been violated, they need to follow up on that matter.

We put forward a number of paid internship programs, and the NDP voted against that.

* * *

[Translation]

PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Claude Patry (Jonquière—Alma, BQ): Mr. Speaker, \$33 billion has been handed over to some shipyards, yet the Davie shipyard has received nothing.

The *Diefenbaker* icebreaker promised to Vancouver is going to cost more than forecast, and it will be eight years late. The Davie shipyard offered to build the icebreaker on budget and on time.

On Tuesday the National Assembly of Quebec passed a unanimous motion calling on Ottawa to reconsider the Vancouver contract and let the Davie shipyard build the icebreaker.

Will the government face the facts and give the contract to the Davie shipyard, thereby saving jobs in the Quebec City region?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, according to the Auditor General, the Irving and Seaspan shipyards were chosen through the most open and transparent military procurement procedure in Canada's history.

The Davie shipyard bid on that contract, but its bid was not selected.

* * *

[English]

PRESENCE IN GALLERY

The Speaker: I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of the Hon. Jeremy Harrison, Minister Responsible for Immigration, Tourism, Innovation and Trade for the Province of Saskatchewan.

Some hon. members: Hear, hear!

The Speaker: It being Thursday, the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster will ask the Thursday question.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we had the latest chapter of this sad government's record on the vote that was held Tuesday night.

It was not a very radical question. It was really a common sense question. We asked that we have relevant answers to intelligent questions in question period.

Mr. Speaker, as you know, all members of the opposition parties and the independent members voted for that NDP motion, including three Conservatives. We certainly congratulate the three Conserva-

tives that stood up and voted for it. However, 144 Conservative MPs voted against the proposition that answers should be relevant in question period. It was as if the Conservative caucus was being whipped to vote against the laws of gravity. It makes absolutely no sense. We are talking about a common sense proposal that was voted against by the Conservative caucus.

There is no doubt that these kinds of decisions by the Conservatives help to undermine public confidence in the government. The government has only 23 sitting weeks to address that. My question for the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons is very simple. What is the government going to do next week to try to repair the tattered, torn and ripped sense of lack of public confidence in the government?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have an opportunity to respond to my colleague. On the question of question period, as I have observed before, the tone of question period is overwhelmingly determined by the tenor of the questions asked.

There was a very worthwhile letter to the editor in *The Globe and Mail* yesterday on exactly that subject from a gentleman from Halifax, which I was most appreciative of. I am sure that if the members of the opposition take heed of that, we will see very high-quality question periods in the future.

In terms of the business of the House, for the balance of today, we will be continuing forward on the Nâáts'ihch'oh national park reserve act, Bill S-5. Tomorrow, it is our intention to complete the last day of Bill C-36. This is the bill to respond to the court's decision. The court has set a deadline for us in December, and we do want to respond to that. We will be proceeding with other matters on the order paper through the following week.

I do intend to identify Tuesday as an additional allotted day. I believe that it will be an opportunity for the NDP once again.

We have had some discussion in the House of the importance of the potential matter of the mission that is under way in combatting the ISIL terrorist threat right now. There is the potential for the schedule that I have laid out to be interrupted at some point in time by the need for a motion of the House, should there be a decision by the government to proceed with a combat mission.

I do not believe that I reported to the House exactly what we are going to be doing on Monday. On Monday, we will deal with Bill S-4, the digital privacy act, and Bill C-21, the red tape reduction act.

* * *

● (1505)

[Translation]

POINT OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, during question period, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration used words that we feel are a disgrace and violate the ethics of this House. It was our understanding that you would address the problem immediately, but we have yet to hear anything about what happened.

Government Orders

[English]

The Speaker: I appreciate the member for Hull—Aylmer raising this. I will examine the blues and make a determination as to the language that was used. It certainly did prompt a reaction, so I will go back, take a look at that and come back to the House.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

NÁÁTS'IHCH'OH NATIONAL PARK RESERVE ACT

Hon. Michelle Rempel (for the Minister of the Environment) moved that Bill S-5, An Act to amend the Canada National Parks Act (Nááts'ihch'oh National Park Reserve of Canada), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I stand before the House today to express my unconditional support for Bill S-5, the Nááts'ihch'oh national park reserve act.

Bill S-5 proposes to protect a vast swath of land in Canada's north, nearly 5,000 square kilometres, an area almost the size of Prince Edward Island.

In August 2012, the Prime Minister travelled to the Northwest Territories to join aboriginal leaders in announcing the establishment of Nááts'ihch'oh national park reserve as Canada's 44th national park. The bill would deliver on work started by this government in 2008 and on the commitment of the Prime Minister to protect this area for future generations.

Nááts'ihch'oh national park reserve is a beautiful landscape located in the southwestern region of the Northwest Territories along the Yukon border. This is within the settlement area of the Sahtu Dene and Métis who have travelled, hunted and trapped there. Given its remote location, the land remains largely wild in nature.

The park would protect habitat for a variety of species such as mountain woodland caribou, grizzly bears, Dall sheep, mountain goats and trumpeter swans. During the short summers, the valleys are covered in wildflowers and insects buzz over the thick carpet of moss, grasses and shrubs. It is truly a site to see.

Given its timeless beauty and more importantly how the lands and waters and abundant wildlife have sustained aboriginal people for generations, it is no wonder that our aboriginal peoples have such a deep connection to these lands. An important spiritual place to local Dene people is the mountain that towers above the Moose Ponds on the upper South Nahanni River. The name of the proposed park reserve, Nááts'ihch'oh, celebrates this bond. The word means "pointed like a porcupine quill", aptly describing the shape of the mountain. The mountain is highly significant to the Sahtu Dene and Métis for its spiritual endowment.

Creating this national park reserve would serve the national interest in several ways. It would preserve a breathtaking landscape for the benefit and enjoyment of future generations. It would create land use certainty that can facilitate investment and economic development for aboriginal and northern Canadians.

Establishing Nááts'ihch'oh national park reserve completes this government's work to significantly expand Nahanni National Park Reserve, which shares its northern boundary with Nááts'ihch'oh, thereby conserving a significant proportion of the South Nahanni River watershed. In short, with the expansion of Nahanni and the creation of Nááts'ihch'oh, this government will have created the third largest national park complex in this country.

These actions build on Canada's strong tradition of international leadership in conservation. Bill S-5 also supports Canada's national conservation plan, which was recently announced by the Prime Minister. The plan contributes to Canada's long-term prosperity by taking concrete action to conserve our nation's lands and waters, restore ecosystems, and connect Canadians to nature.

The creation of Nááts'ihch'oh also supports Canada's northern strategy, a plan to assign the north and northerners a larger role in our country's democracy.

To fully appreciate the importance of the proposed national park reserve, one must first understand the significance of the northern strategy. For generations, Canadians considered the north the land of the future. That future is upon us now. The time has come for Canadians to fully embrace the north and realize the tremendous potential and opportunities it offers. The northern strategy envisions healthy, sustainable lands and vibrant communities of people.

The northern strategy prompts action in four areas: protecting our northern environmental heritage, promoting economic and social development, improving northern governance, and exercising Canada's sovereignty over the north. Since the strategy was launched in 2007, significant progress has been made on each of these important areas. The progress is shown through the conservation of environmentally sensitive waters and lands, such as we are doing with Nááts'ihch'oh.

Additionally, employment and infrastructure in the community of Tulita will support the prosperity of the area with new housing, skills development and training. This is partly because nearly every action taken under the strategy is designed to act as a catalyst. Improvements in governance, for instance, tend to spark economic and social development.

Today, more northern lands are protected from development than at any point in our country's great history.

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•(1510)

With the creation of Nááts'ihch'oh, more than 10% of Canada's three northern territories would be protected. It is important to know that is an area about the size of Newfoundland and Labrador. This would ensure the protection of some of our nation's most spectacular scenery, the preservation of unique cultural heritage areas and the provision of unparalleled visitor opportunities to explore these lands and cultures.

There are more job and training opportunities than ever before, creating more economic prosperity in our northern lands, and northerners have a greater say in the decisions that affect them most. The legislation before us would further push this process along and inspire direct progress in three of the northern strategy's four policy areas.

The establishment of Nááts'ihch'oh national park reserve would contribute significantly to environmental protection. With the addition of Nááts'ihch'oh, more than 86% of the South Nahanni watershed would be protected. The combined Nahanni–Nááts'ihch'oh park complex would include a habitat that would protect up to 600 grizzly bears, which is nine times greater than the number of grizzly bears protected within Banff, Canada's first national park. What a legacy for Canada's future generations.

The establishment of Nááts'ihch'oh would promote social and economic development, another component of the northern strategy. Nature lovers and adventurers from across the country and around the world appreciate the remarkable beauty of Canada's north, and many can be expected to travel to Nááts'ihch'oh to experience its spectacular landscapes, flora and fauna. The park headquarters and visitor centre would be established in the community of Tulita, generating job and training opportunities and the economic benefits of new infrastructure projects.

Establishing the park reserve would also trigger direct infusions of resources. For example, during the first five years of the park's operation, Parks Canada would invest nearly \$3 million to build offices, a visitor centre and staff accommodation. It would have an annual operating budget of \$1.2 million. For a town of only a few hundred people, this is a significant investment that would open the door to a number of additional opportunities. Northerners would also have an active role in managing the new park reserve, which would help build capacity and strengthen northern governance.

An impact and benefit plan, negotiated by Parks Canada and the Sahtu Dene and Métis who live near Nááts'ihch'oh would provide for the collaborative management of the national park reserve by a committee composed of representatives of Parks Canada and the Sahtu Dene and Métis, fulfilling requirements of the Sahtu Dene and Métis land claim agreement. As a result, northerners would have greater control over their lands, an essential component of sound governance.

Parks Canada partners with aboriginal peoples to establish, manage and protect lands and ensure that ancient traditions and harvesting customs such as hunting, trapping and fishing, continue. In fact, formal agreements with aboriginal peoples contribute to the effective stewardship of nearly 70% of all Parks Canada's lands.

Parks Canada maintains effective relationships with more than 130 aboriginal groups across Canada through a broad spectrum of mechanisms and agreements. Establishing the Nááts'ihch'oh park reserve would further this modern, progressive and inclusive vision of the north, particularly to southern and international audiences. It would protect our culture and natural heritage and help sustain communities and develop leaders in our north. There can be absolutely no doubt that rapid change is under way in the north.

The important question that we must ask ourselves is this. How can we influence the course of change to benefit northerners and Canadians for both the present and future generations?

The bill is a concrete example of the action we are taking within the northern strategy, which proposes a responsible approach to development that balances environmental protection with social and economic development, empowers northerners and exercises Canada's sovereignty in the north.

Protecting large representative natural regions while encouraging a diverse economy in the north is a crucial part of this strategy and is the centrepiece of the creation of this new national park reserve. Doing so creates jobs and raises awareness of the spectacular yet fragile ecosystems and the age-old cultures that comprise the rich heritage of our north. In these places, there is a palpable sense of harmony. Everything around us is connected and we are connected to everything around us.

•(1515)

I encourage members to bear this connection in mind as we discuss the proposed legislation. There is enormous potential that can be achieved through this bill, such as protecting the environment, creating jobs, and ensuring that our north stays beautiful for future generations.

Although thousands of kilometres separate us from Nááts'ihch'oh, we must recognize its considerable value and power as a national park reserve. I urge everyone to join me in support of the legislation now before us.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Northwest Territories, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the parliamentary secretary for his presentation on the Nááts'ihch'oh new park reserve in the Northwest Territories.

I have stood here on a number of occasions talking about the Conservatives' plans for parks expansions. I think of the Nahanni park expansion in 2007, which we supported after having written confirmation from the minister at the time, Mr. Prentice, that there would be investments made into the communities and into capital to promote the park and provide visitor centres and things that would provide an impetus to tourism and the development of our communities. Seven years have passed, and nothing in those promises has been built in the Dehcho region, in Fort Simpson, or in Nahanni Butte.

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Therefore, as we go forward with another national park reserve, of course my question for the parliamentary secretary is this: that guarantees does he have that we are not going to wait another seven years to see a proper visitor centre and the facilities required to operate a park and make it a valuable economic opportunity for the people of the Sahtu region? What kind of guarantees and programs have been established within the department to ensure that this work goes ahead in a timely fashion?

● (1520)

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from the north for that very important question, because I think we both share a common goal of developing the north, bringing employment, and opening up these parks to Canadians to participate in.

As I said in my speech, we have certain financial commitments that we are standing by. In this area of the world, there are challenges when we build certain infrastructures, but Parks Canada and our government are committed to following through on these agreements.

When we build on these conversations, we employ a group process; in other words, we bring in first nations, parks officials, and stakeholders to make sure that our investments are going to benefit the local community. It is all about working with the community to conserve and restore, as well as to connect Canadians to this wonderful part of our country and our heritage.

I am hoping that the NDP and the Liberals will work with us enthusiastically to make this park and reserve a reality.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the words that Canadians fear most are, “Hello. I’m from the government and I’m here to help you.” Similarly, with members of the government, the words that they fear most are, “Hello. I’m from the opposition and I’m here to help you.”

Of course we support the creation of this park and we look forward to working with the hon. member.

I do want to note that this is a reserve as opposed to a park. It is a reserve for a park, which is a different order than simply the creation of a park. That is largely dependent on the status of negotiations with various aboriginal interests. I am interested in the hon. member’s comments with respect to the status of negotiations with the various aboriginal communities affected.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for that very important question, because the status of negotiations with first nations certainly does take precedence over creation of the park. That is why we are working very carefully with first nations, the Sahtu Dene and Métis in the area, and everyone involved.

In terms of the long-term goals, as my colleague said quite jokingly, the comment people fear is “I’m from the government and I’m here to help” and “I’m from the opposition and I’m here to help.” I am actually looking forward to comments from my colleague from the environment committee, because this is something all of us share as a long-term goal. As I said in my speech, the future is now. The north is our future, and it is important that we work with the communities in the areas to make sure we develop it and also protect its heritage.

One extremely important thing is the different species at risk in the area that would be protected through this piece of legislation. I look forward to continuing to work with my colleagues all through the House, but I recognize too the importance of working with first nations as we move forward in this process.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the speech by the hon. member, but I am a little puzzled by the response to the question from my colleague from Northwest Territories.

He raised questions about undertakings to deliver on jobs and development within the expanded Nahanni park right into the watershed. My understanding is that an agreement was actually signed two years ago between the government and the Sahtu Dene and Métis. It was then that the undertaking was made to build infrastructure in the watershed part of the park that would provide specific jobs to the first nations and Métis people in the area.

The question, then, relates to yet another undertaking from two years ago. What is planned in the budget update for this fall to actually deliver on those promises?

● (1525)

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for that question, because it is a very specific question and it is very important that people know.

Parks Canada is moving forward with plans for the Nááts’ihch’oh park office, a visitor centre, a warehouse, a garage for the park operations, and housing for park staff in Tulita. I did mention this in my speech.

The Tulita District Benefit Corporation was established by the Sahtu Dene and Métis to coordinate their economic opportunities and the benefits of the new park.

I appreciate the opportunity to expand on my earlier comments. Local tradespeople would be employed in the construction and maintenance of this infrastructure in the community of Tulita. Capital funds to be committed to these construction projects will amount to \$2.8 million. In exchange, Parks Canada will have a long-term lease as a tenant in the office complex. The organization chart for the park includes nine staff positions—six full-time and 3.5 part-time—and two student positions. It is anticipated that the majority of these positions, including two trainee positions, will be filled by Sahtu Dene and Métis from the Tulita district. These employees, as agreed in the IBP, would be hired preferentially among the Sahtu Dene and Métis of the Tulita district.

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this particular bill is obviously favoured by people in the Northwest Territories, especially people who live in the Nahanni park area. I have heard many wonderful things about this particular area and the great work that has been done by many of the aboriginal governments in that particular area.

Whenever we build reserves or expand reserves like this in different regions of the country, obviously we do it to protect our natural habitat and our natural environment, but in many cases there is also an expectation by aboriginal groups for some real social and economic development as a result of it. So far, this is not happening in this particular region.

I am wondering if the government is really serious about investing here to ensure that development happens for the people who live there.

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her question, because that is exactly why we are moving this initiative forward in the way that we are. We are strongly committed to fulfill what we have discussed here this afternoon.

My previous answer discussed the details of what has been arranged. Of course, when economic development is brought in and people are given jobs, it certainly helps the social aspects of the community and encourages further development.

I think not only our government but also our opposition colleagues, all of us in this House, are committed to moving forward on this matter. I do hope that I can count on the support of members in this House to move this legislation forward.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Northwest Territories, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill S-5, which is a bill to create Nááts'ihch'oh national park in the Sahtu Region of the Northwest Territories.

This region is centred around the Mackenzie River and stretches towards the Yukon boundary with an incredibly beautiful mountain range and the magnificent wilderness that is the Northwest Territories.

I represent people who, when polled, have some of the highest regard for the environment among all the people in Canada. We really have that respect, and respect for the idea of national parks is strong in the Northwest Territories.

We have seen the creation of many national parks over many years throughout our territory and we understand the inherent issues that surround the development of national parks. Our first nations people have experience in dealing with park bureaucracies and understand how national parks and their rules and regulations sometimes intervene in their traditional lifestyle.

The Sahtu Dene have agreed to this park and to a comprehensive and co-operative management system that goes along with it. We look forward to seeing more details of that in committee so that we can understand how their interests will be protected going forward.

I am very pleased to see this beautiful area protected; however, I am not happy that the Conservatives chose the smallest size possible for the park.

Through the process of developing this park, there were three options that were set out for the park.

Option one was a total area of 6,450 square kilometres. It was developed to best protect conservation values while providing an open area around the existing mineral interests.

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Option two was a total area of 5,770 square kilometres, which diminished the achievement of conservation goals and allowed more mineral potential to be available.

Option three, and this is the one chosen by the Conservatives, was the smallest proposal, with a total area of 4,840 square kilometres. It took advantage of the mineral potential within the proposed park reserve while providing some protection to key values.

The Conservatives made this choice despite option one, the option of 6,450 square kilometres, getting the overwhelming support, at 92.3%, of those who indicated a preference during public consultations on the proposed park.

The people of the north said that they were fine with the park, but they wanted to make sure that the park works for the resources and values that are being included within it. This has not been done completely with this park. That is not surprising, because many on that side of the House see national parks as a waste of land and resources.

For example, the member for Oak Ridges—Markham has publicly stated that Parks Canada staff are not the best stewards of Canada's land. When a national park was proposed for part of his riding, he responded, "We're going to have to do whatever we can to prevent it." He quickly changed his tune, however, when his bosses here in Ottawa told him that he should be in favour of the Rouge national urban park. It is a small park, but it is a park that absolutely has value for urban residents of Canada.

The belief that parks are a waste of land and resources is just plain wrong. National parks create long-term sustainable jobs and they create opportunities in tourism and support industries. These jobs and economic opportunities last forever, unlike those in the resource sector. Extraction only lasts a few years, and we are very familiar with that. Sometimes they leave a legacy of destruction that lasts for eternity, as was the case with the Giant Mine, so we have to be very careful with how we deal with land.

We know that in the Northwest Territories. We understand what goes on with development and we understand why we have to preserve land and why it is important that land be put aside.

• (1530)

Recently I had the opportunity to travel to Yukon to Kluane National Park and Reserve. Yukon's Parks Canada is worked with the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations to create a visitor centre at the Da Ku Cultural Centre in Haines Junction. This centre and the numerous businesses in Haines Junction all exist because of Kluane National Park and Reserve. Like other national parks, Kluane has created jobs and economic opportunities that are long lasting and environmentally sound.

However, many times it seems to me that to the Conservatives, tourism jobs and economic opportunities that surround that type of activity are of little value because it puts money not in the hands of big corporations, but in the hands of little people, local people, workers and those who want to see a future for the preservation of our natural beauty and such like. Is this the reason why the Conservatives chose the smallest size possible for the park against the recommendations of all the people who chose to make those recommendations in the public consultations?

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I want to talk about the tourism industry, because it is what really will give the economic opportunities to the Sahtu region by putting aside 4,850 square kilometres of land. Tourism opportunities provide great potentials for our future. They provide local jobs and local businesses, as with Kluane, and Kluane has been done in a very good fashion. It took years to get there. It took many difficult negotiations with first nations so they would achieve benefits, but now they are. We do not want to make those mistakes with any new national park. We want to move to the good side as quickly as possible.

The tourist industry in Canada, though, creates more than \$84 billion in economic activity, more than \$17 billion in export revenue, nearly \$10 billion in federal revenue and employs more than 600,000 Canadians. Tourism's contribution to the GDP is worth more than agriculture, fisheries and forestry combined. Despite these figures, the Conservatives have turned their backs on Canadian tourist operators.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce has ranked the lack of support for our tourism industry as one of the top ten barriers to the competitiveness of the Canadian economy. Canada, during the reign of the Conservatives, has cut its tourism marketing budget by 20% over the last nine years. Instead of expanding the budget as it should be with inflation and all the rest, we have seen a cutback of 20%. It has forced the Canadian Tourism Commission to abandon advertising initiatives in lucrative markets like the United States. The Canadian Tourism Commission's core funding has declined from nearly \$100 million in 2001.

The Conservatives continued lack of leadership in promoting tourism at home and abroad is needlessly damaging what was once a good news story for the Canadian economy. A quick look at other countries shows just how little the Conservatives support the tourism industry. Those results are showing in the incredible drop that we have seen in international tourism visitations to Canada.

These are countries where the money has been put in tourism: Ireland spent \$211 million a year in promoting its tourism, which is a 14% increase in the same time; Mexico, \$153 million, 4% increase; Australia, \$147 million, 30% increase; Canada \$72 million, down 10% over that same period. By the time when we factor in inflation, we see a massive decrease in the support for the tourism industry.

There is an old saying, and this is one that the neoliberals like: "A rising tide raises all boats". What we see in the tourism industry is a falling tide which has becalmed the industry and left a lot of tourism boats stranded on the shore.

• (1535)

When we talk about increasing national parks, we want to talk about expanding tourism.

What operator is going to create a new market in Canada for a new product when the Conservative government has decimated our tourism market. It has refused to put the dollars into it that can return, promote and increase this very important market. It is very content to see the tide go out and the boats sit on the sandy floor of the bay.

The Conservatives changed the tourism tax rebates, so only those on packaged tours could apply for a tax refund, rather than the old

system where any visitor to Canada could get their GST refunded. This change has really hit small tourism businesses, but has provided an unfair advantage to large tourism operations.

What is going to happen in the Northwest Territories? We have small tourism operators. Everybody in the tourism industry starts out small. The average time to make a tourism business profitable is between 10 and 14 years. Someone has to invest. They have to create the market. They have to create the product. They have to make it work. That is what is going to have to happen in Nááts'ihch'oh. That is where we are going to have to put the investment to get the tourism industry to work there.

We need the support of the federal government on the federal programs that increase the volume of tourists to Canada. That is a fundamental.

I have included this in my speech because we want to see benefits from taking 4,850 square kilometres of land and creating a national park, which is a great idea for the people of Canada, and can be a great idea for the people of the north, but we need to promote tourism.

However, there is another story about tourism with the government and how little it supports it, and that is its treatment of Parks Canada. In budget 2012, Parks Canada had 638 positions eliminated. Many of the positions in national parks in the Northwest Territories, Nunavut and Yukon were lost as well.

When we are trying to build a tourism industry based upon natural beauty, national parks, we see that the cutbacks affect that throughout the system.

Budget 2012 cut Parks Canada's budget by almost 7.1%. The cuts hit parks and historic sites nationwide. Nova Scotia's Fortress of Louisbourg, touted by the Canadian Tourism Association as a signature designation, is facing the loss of 120 jobs. Banff National Park, another prime tourist destination, is losing 40 jobs.

Winter services have been eliminated and visitors are left to guide themselves at historic sites.

We have even cut out cross-country ski trail building. One activity that could be guaranteed in national parks throughout northern Canada was cross-country ski events. We do not have that anymore.

Budget 2014 included \$391 million, allocated over five years, allowing the agency to improve roads, bridges and dams located in Canada's national parks and historic canals. However, the 2014 budget specifies that only \$1 million is allocated for this fiscal year and \$4 million for 2015-16, with the rest to be handed out in 2016 and onward, after the next election.

It is estimated by Parks Canada reports the cost could be as much as \$2.7 billion to complete all deferred infrastructure programs.

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We are happy we see an agreement between the Sahtu Dene and Métis and the current government to create a national park reserve: Nááts'ihch'oh. This is a good thing. However, it cannot stand by itself. Efforts have to be made to create a situation where, what the parliamentary secretary talked about, the economic opportunities, the jobs, the local economy that can come out of a national park can flourish, and that is linked to tourism.

● (1540)

Without the effort put into that, without the effort put into Parks Canada to provide it with the resources to promote tourism, without the effort put in by the Canadian Tourism Commission and without the resources to advertise to promote Canada worldwide, we will not see an increase in our tourism, and we will continue this downward trend. This beautiful country, with so much to offer to so many people around the world, is not getting its due right now.

We are spending all kinds of money promoting the oil and gas industry, trying to do the work for multinational corporations that should do their own work because they are making massive profits from these resources. What do we do for the tourism people? What do we do for those little people who are trying to set up small businesses? What do we do to set up the opportunities for people to work in this field? We are cutting back on the resources that are available to promote this very important sector.

As I have pointed out, agriculture, forestry and fishing combined do not match up to the impact that tourism has on our economy. We want to be successful in the Northwest Territories. We want our people to have an opportunity to take advantage of the natural beauty of our country and the land. We want our first nations, which have gone into agreements, to invest in business and opportunities in the tourism sector. That is the real growth potential for the national parks in the Northwest Territories.

However, the government has shown that it is not interested in that. Perhaps after the next election, we will have another government; it looks likely. At that time, we perhaps will see the true potential of the Canadian national parks system, including all those in the Northwest Territories. They will have an opportunity to grow, so the people in that region, who have given up so much to provide these beautiful national parks to Canada for eternity, will have an opportunity to achieve a prosperous lifestyle from doing that. It will be hard. There is nothing easy about the tourism industry. It takes time, effort and resources, but it also takes the active participation of the Government of Canada in promoting Canada as a destination.

We cannot back off from that. We cannot say that it is not important, that we will leave it to the private sector. That does not work. This is our country. We have to make the best opportunities for it. We cannot simply continue to cut the opportunities that exist there to show the world what we have here.

I appreciate this. I really hope the Conservatives this time follow up on this, and have an active plan to get the facilities in place. With the Nahanni National Park Reserve expansion, we were promised seven years ago that these facilities would be built, including a proper visitors centre in Fort Simpson. The Nahanni National Park Reserve is a world heritage site. It is famous around the world, yet there is absolutely nothing in Fort Simpson to sell somebody on

getting in a plane and flying all the way out there to look at it. There is nothing there. There is nothing that has been put in place yet, after seven years. That is a shocking record. That is a record of ineffective behaviour. That is a record of not understanding how to get along with first nations to accomplish this. This is where that sits in the Nahanni National Park Reserve expansion plans.

I trust there is someone on the other side who might be listening to this and understanding that there is work to be done here, that this is not all just clapping our hands for the wonderful things that the government has created. The government has not created anything. It has taken land and put it aside. Now we need the work to go in to making it something.

● (1545)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to disagree with my colleague's saying the government has not created something.

We have actually worked very closely with the Sahtu Dene and Métis in the Northwest Territories. They are going to benefit from lasting economic, cultural, and social benefits thanks to the agreement our government signed in 2012.

If we look at it, the Nááts'ihch'oh national park reserve translates into a sixfold expansion of the protected area in the Nahanni region by our government.

This creation has been years in the making, involving consultations with communities, aboriginal groups, industry, and the Government of the Northwest Territories.

My colleague talked about tourism, and I would like to point out that this is extremely important. Parks Canada would be working with our Sahtu partners in the development of aboriginal-operated visitor experience opportunities. I would point him toward sections 19.4 and 19.5 of the impact and benefit plan, which commit Parks Canada to explore opportunities such as river guiding, ecotourism service, and the in-park accommodation with the Sahtu businesses. I would remind the member that it is over \$2.8 million that we would be investing in this.

In the context of this bill, and since I did point out those different sections, would the hon. member not agree that expansion of the Nahanni and the establishment of the Nááts'ihch'oh and the agreement with the Sahtu would help promote tourism in this region?

● (1550)

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, as I said in my speech, developing tourism is a difficult and expensive business. I have been involved with tourism development in the Northwest Territories. I have chaired a tourism advisory board for 10 years.

I know what I am talking about when it comes to the need to develop. It takes time. This is not something that is done overnight.

If we want an operator to start working on this, we need to show that there is going to be a market. We need to first develop a product, then find the market for the product, and promote that product. That all takes time and resources.

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While the government says that these are going to develop overnight, they are not. We need to see a commitment on the part of the federal government and Parks Canada to work with any operator in the future to make this happen. That is the reality of the situation.

I truly hope that Nááts'ihch'oh becomes a focal point for tourism, but many years of investment and effort are required to make that happen.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member has a significant advantage over me in this debate, and I had a significant advantage over him in the debate earlier this morning, because I live close to the Rouge Park and he lives in some proximity to Nááts'ihch'oh. He has more familiarity with the park than I do.

The member made some reference to the drawing of the boundaries. I note that the drawing of the boundaries seems to exclude a couple of mines. Within the bill itself—and I do not know whether or not this is a usual thing in a park bill—it says the minister may enter into leases or licences for mining access roads, and the minister may issue, amend, renew, suspend, or cancel licences for the use of water for the purposes of mining access roads.

I would be interested in whether that is at all usual, in the member's experience, and whether or not any public consultation occurred around that, given his proximity to the park itself.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, certainly the issue of the access road was one that raised a number of flags at the time. More than that, the big issue has been the reduction in size of the park. The larger size of the park, 6,450 square kilometres, was developed to best protect conservation values. The range of the animals that the park would be home to and the types of situations that would be involved with watersheds were best served by the 6,450 square kilometre size.

The 4,840 square kilometre size has opened up opportunities for other things to happen. Whether they happen or not, the park has not been given the surety that the 6,450 square kilometre size would have done.

• (1555)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I concur entirely with the concern of the member for Northwest Territories about tourism in this country. Having seen Canada drop from 7th most visited country in 2002 to 18th in 2011, one can draw some lines.

One of the concerning things is that the largest market for tourists to Canada is visitors from the United States, but under the current administration, all tourism advertising in the U.S. market has been cancelled. The only product we are advertising in the United States is bitumen.

I would like to ask him about the Nááts'ihch'oh. He hinted at his concern about the smaller boundaries. We know that the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society and many other conservationists on the ground believe these smaller boundaries will not be adequate to protect the South Nahanni. I want to ask if he shares those concerns.

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, those concerns were shared among 92% of the people who had opinions on it in the public process. As a citizen and representative of the people of the

Northwest Territories, I too have those concerns. When we set up a park, we set it up to provide protection for certain values, whether those values are wildlife or the watershed. Those are things that we do.

I live next to Wood Buffalo National Park, an area that is considerably larger than this park. It is the largest park in Canada, the largest area in North America with no seismic lines. It is the largest area where there is a complete biosphere. It is an amazing area, and we have paid the price for that. In my community, I would love to see more tourism related to it because, of course, that is a big part of the landscape of northern Alberta and southern N.W.T.

When we take out land, we must provide other answers for people. It is a two-way street. The choices have been made. This is what the Conservative government has put forward. We can live with this, but is it the best solution? The people who looked at it in detail said no.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for the Northwest Territories for his excellent speech.

If our leader were in the House, he would agree that the hon. member's speech reflected our noble values and desire to protect the earth and keep it healthy. Those values are extremely important for the future of our national parks, which are often located in areas where there is less tourism than elsewhere and where we want to protect the flora and fauna.

For example, I am thinking about Mingan Archipelago National Park Reserve on Quebec's north shore, where the remnants of the last ice age are being protected. These parks exist for good reason, particularly so that areas are properly developed.

I know that the hon. member spoke about tourism, but could he explain the socio-economic importance of this park?

[*English*]

Mr. Dennis Bevington: Mr. Speaker, it really remains to be seen. As the parliamentary secretary pointed out, there are agreements that have been made about certain staffing and certain things are going to go in place in Tulita, a town of 400 people. Those will certainly help that small community with those parks personnel.

However, what have I seen in the years that I have lived next to a national park? The number of personnel in the park has gone down under the Liberals. It has gone down under the Conservatives. We have seen that this has not been the panacea that has been laid out for us, because consistent cutbacks over the years have changed that relationship.

• (1600)

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, thank you for this opportunity to debate another park bill. This seems to be park day on the Hill. I am hopefully seeking from colleagues and from you, Mr. Speaker, the opportunity to split my time with the member for Labrador in the event that she does arrive.

In the meanwhile, I want to indicate our preliminary support for the bill. This is in effect an extension of the Nahanni park—

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The Deputy Speaker: Because we are at second reading in the second rotation of this debate, we require unanimous consent for the member if he is going to split his time with another member. Does the member have unanimous consent to split his time with the member for Labrador?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Deputy Speaker: There is unanimous consent.

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, I am thankful to my colleagues. I am sure that members will be much more enlightened and informed by the comments the member for Labrador will give in this particular debate.

As we know, this is an extension of Nahanni park. The original Nahanni park was created by then Prime Minister Trudeau. We in the Liberal Party could hardly be against any park that originated with a prime minister named Trudeau. We are actually hoping that there will be a second prime minister named Trudeau, but that is up to the will of the people.

We are concerned about a couple of things. The park is good in its conception. We have some concerns about the way the boundaries were determined. Unlike the Rouge park we were debating this morning, there are actually boundaries this time. The Rouge park we were debating this morning has no boundaries except three small parcels of land in Markham. That is one significant difference.

A second significant difference is that this park commits itself to the provisions of the Canada National Parks Act, which is a high level of ecological integrity, whereas the debate this morning had to do with what a new commitment for an urban park would be in terms of ecological integrity. I would make those two notes.

I take note of the fact that when there was a canvassing as to whether this should be a park or a reserve, in 2010, the government entered into some consultations. Over 70% of the 1,600 people they consulted with wanted the entire South Nahanni watershed protected as a park. That was a clearly expressed will. When that was not going to occur, 65 people commented on options one, two, and three. Option one was the largest parcel. Sixty of the 65 people supported the largest option. Only three people supported the second option, which was significantly smaller, and only two people supported the option that is in front of us today. Therefore, of the 1,600 residents, stakeholders, and aboriginal folks who were consulted, only two people thought this was the best configuration possible for this particular park. It is a strange situation to be in to have only two people, of those consulted, actually agree that this is the best possible option.

There were four options: the entire watershed; option one, which was a larger concept; option two, which was a smaller concept; and, option three, which was quite clearly the smallest concept.

If we saw the actual configuration, it is divided into two pieces. One has to leave the one piece, go south into the original part of the park, and then go back into the other piece. There is no connection between the two parcels being put forward in this bill. It seems to me that this is a fundamental issue, because between the two parcels, the smaller parcel and the larger parcel, is a tungsten mine or a couple of tungsten mines. It may well be that the government decided to write the mines out of the park to facilitate these mines. I do not know.

●(1605)

It was not mentioned in the hon. parliamentary secretary's speech why the government chose the least palatable option for the people most affected. I hope that will be explained better in question period.

I am sorry. I do not mean question period. I do not expect anything from question period. I have very low expectations of question period, and they seem to be met each and every day.

I hope that in committee there might be some explanation forthcoming as to why this is a very small piece, relative to what the actual concern was. It may have to do, as I say, with the tungsten mines. There is no question that tungsten is a strategic asset. It is an asset that is largely controlled by countries other than Canada. Nevertheless, it is an issue.

As I raised earlier, there is a mining road that runs through the smaller portion of the park. Interestingly, the minister reserves for herself the right to license that road and to assign that license. She also reserves the right to take, in effect, water from the park and make it available to the mines. Again, these are questions to which I do not have answers, but it is in the legislation, and it does create a certain element of questioning.

It also raises the interesting question about consultation. If we have consultation and seek consent, social license, from the stakeholders, why would we actually go against the wishes of the 1,600 people who were consulted? It seems to be a somewhat superficial level of consultation. It is a concern that needs to be raised when we put this before committee.

As a general proposition, I think this is a concept that we in the Liberal Party can support. It is an idea we think needs a bit more examination. There are questions that need to be asked, but we look forward to asking them in committee.

I thank my colleagues for their time and attention, and I look forward to their questions.

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour of working with my colleague who just finished his speech, as well as with my colleague from the NDP who spoke earlier. You will recognize that I tried to get a question in earlier, but there was not time.

I would just like to comment that had it not been for the lack of co-operation from our NDP partners, we probably could have been in committee already doing some work on some of these important initiatives to protect our environment. Maybe my colleague from the NDP could explain at some future date why we are still not in committee, but that is another matter.

My colleague from the Liberal Party just acknowledged his support for this bill, for which I am thankful. It is important that we continue to support efforts to protect our natural areas.

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In response to a comment my NDP colleague made earlier, he gave the impression that we on this side do not want to protect our natural areas. I would just like to point out that since 2006, our government has made a sixfold expansion of the Nahanni National Park Reserve in the Northwest Territories. It is considered to be one of the most significant conservation achievements of a generation. We have secured almost 4,000 square kilometres of ecologically sensitive private lands. We have added an area nearly twice the size of Vancouver Island to the network of federally protected areas.

I wonder if my colleague from the Liberal Party would disagree with my colleague from the NDP, who just moments ago made some disparaging remarks about the effort on this side of the House to protect our environment and our protected areas through national parks.

• (1610)

Hon. John McKay: Mr. Speaker, it always amazes me the sensitivity of the government members. If we are not patting them on the back, they feel insulted.

I am going to let the NDP defend the NDP. I have enough trouble defending Liberals.

The hon. member talked about the concept of putting land aside. Well, the Library of Parliament did a pretty good analysis and said that the Conservatives did not take the South Nahanni piece, which is what everyone wanted. It was the whole watershed to the south of 6,450 square kilometre. They did not take the 5,770 square kilometre piece. They opted for the 4,840 square kilometre piece. Basically, the government takes the position that something is better than nothing.

I appreciate the hon. member's sensitivity to any criticism whatsoever, but I would point out that maybe the Conservatives would not be quite so criticized if in fact they funded Environment Canada properly, if they funded Parks Canada properly, and if they actually created some trust among folks.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Northwest Territories, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this whole question of putting aside land for the future for Canadians is not something that started with the Conservative government. Many of the plans for some of these areas have been ongoing for many years. We have been working on parks, like the park on the north shore of Great Slave Lake, for about 25 years. If it happens to come to fruition under any particular government, that will be great.

We have a program in Canada that we continue through successive governments, and I hope it continues. It will continue, I am sure, under a New Democratic government, coming very soon to members' screens.

This is the reality of what we do in Canada. However, we need to make sure that when we take land out of circulation, we provide the proper resources. The effort needs to go into them to ensure that they are useful and significant parts of the local economies in those areas. This is what it is all about.

We could put aside much land. Remember, this is a national park reserve at this point in time. Does my colleague not agree that fundamentally, this program of protecting natural areas is something that is going to be valuable to Canada in the future? There are still many other areas, perhaps in—

The Deputy Speaker: Order. We are out of time for the question.

The member for Scarborough—Guildwood will have 30 seconds to respond.

• (1615)

Hon. John McKay: Thank you for your generosity, Mr. Speaker.

I hope that whoever is the next government continues this creation. I anticipate the creation of these parks. However, I also anticipate that it may be a while before NDP governments actually create anything.

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak in this debate. I thank my colleague, the member for Scarborough—Guildwood for sharing his time with me today. He is very generous.

Bill S-5 is really about expanding lands in the Arctic regions of our country. It continues a process that was started more than 10 years ago in this country by the Liberal government, and that is protecting different parts of Canada's north either through designation of national park areas or national park reserves. The Liberal Party has a long history of supporting the creation and expansion of our national park system in every part of the country.

We have a diverse geological environmental landscape, as we know, and we are very proud of that. It is one of the things that we continue to market as a country. In doing so, we also know that the animal species need to be protected and maintained in those areas, along with all of our agricultural species.

The Nahanni National Park Reserve was created in 1976, and I was reading that it was created by the Trudeau government. That would be a very proud legacy for the people in that particular area, as it would have been for many of the other parks that were created.

The Liberal Party has always been committed to the principles of habitat conservation. We must have regions in the Arctic of Canada that are dedicated to protecting and preserving our many species of flora and fauna, along with animal habitat. This particular reserve area, as was noted by others who spoke today, would certainly preserve the grizzly bear population, which has always been a national attraction in this country.

It is also important that we recognize the traditional lands and work in consultation with first nations groups before moving toward any of these particular designations. This is something the aboriginal people in the Northwest Territories, those self-governments in that particular area, have asked for. They have already seen the vision and the need to protect large reserves within and adjacent to their land claim areas to ensure that these lands are there for future generations to provide for those who live around them.

The Nahanni National Park is a great example of where we have seen aboriginal governments play a big role in the development of social and economic activity. We can only hope that the reserve that is now being looked at, the Nááts'ihch'oh reserve, would also some day be able to have those same opportunities.

I am sure there are very few national parks in this country that have mining developments. In the Nahanni National Park there is tungsten mining, all of it really being done in partnership with aboriginal governments. Almost all of the jobs in these mines are taken by aboriginal people and they have a large control over what is happening there, which I am very proud to say is a model that we could be using in a lot of other operations on aboriginal lands, which we do not see today.

I am very fortunate to have a riding where I am seeing the development of the Torngat Mountains National Park in Labrador. It was a process that started a very long time ago, as far back as 1969. It has been going on as long as I have been in the world. It took until 2005 for the park reserve itself to be established. We are now finally getting the agreement and consent of the Labrador Inuit people. We are seeing the vision of the Labrador Inuit people for this reserve land and how they want this national park emerge.

● (1620)

When their land claim agreement was finalized, soon after, in 2008, the Torngat transitioned into full national park status. That transition has taken them in large steps from that day to this, where they are seeing 10,000 square kilometres being developed. In fact, it is the largest national park in Atlantic Canada, and as Labradorians, we are so proud of this. We are so proud of the unique area of this country that is being preserved in our homeland and being protected.

This year, in the Torngat National Park there were a lot of Inuit people who made the trek back to their original ancestral roots. There were a lot of schoolchildren who visited the park to learn about the environmental habitat of that particular park area, to learn the history of their ancestors. I can only hope that with what we are doing today with the Nâáts'ihch'oh park reserve area, one day it will become a park and one day we will see those kinds of activities occurring in that region of the country as well.

I have had the opportunity to visit the Northwest Territories with my colleague in the NDP, who is the member of Parliament for the Northwest Territories, when we worked on the committee that was finalizing the land devolution agreement for that area. He is very passionate about what is happening in the Northwest Territories, and he is also very concerned that we do not have large enough areas of reserve in that area being protected. I understand, certainly, his view and his perspective, but I am sure as well he shares the tremendous excitement that exists there right now over the fact that they are able to create this reserve and are able to protect this entire area for future development.

Whenever we have those kinds of national park reserves and then they revert to national parks, there is also an expectation from people in the local area that it is not just an area of land that is protected, but it is also enhanced. It is an area of land that becomes a learning environment for all of us in Canada. It becomes a place where we can attract tourism, where we can attract development and infrastructure that will not damage the natural habitat and landscape but in fact enhance it and enhance the lives of the people who live there, allowing them to have good jobs and to have good programs and services in their area.

Oftentimes when these types of developments are done, they are accompanied with commitments from the federal government,

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commitments to provide for that learning environment, to provide for that infrastructure. I can only hope that it will happen in this case that people in this area will not just have a reserve area that can only be accessed or used by people who have deep pockets, but it will be a place of cultural learning and experience, a place where we can really promote this country and allow the people, the aboriginal people in particular who have ownership in these regions, to have real prosperity and growth.

I will conclude, but I just want to say I am very pleased to support the creation of this national park reserve. I hope that we can find new ways, great ways, to protect and preserve vital parts of this country for future generations.

● (1625)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her speech and for taking the time to visit the far north, as I did last summer. It is a wonderful region of Canada, full of natural beauty. It was also interesting to meet the people who live there.

What does my colleague think the bill is lacking? For example, if we are talking about surface area, does she think the bill contains rules that are strong enough to create a real park with an ecosystem approach that will be truly protected, a park that will focus on conserving and developing flora and fauna habitats?

[*English*]

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to travel across all of Canada's Arctic regions, including the Northwest Territories. I have not been into every community there, but I have had the opportunity to visit some of the towns and to meet with many different groups and organizations.

I know from living in the north about living in an area that is very much dependent on the natural environment around us to be able to survive socially and economically, but also to contribute to the rest of the country. I know that protecting the lands is a sacred thing because that is the kind of environment that I live in today, and I know that others in the Arctic share that as well. For us, without the protection of lands, without the protection of habitat and our natural environment, we know that we jeopardize the future of generations of our own people not just the rest of the people around us, so we always make a very conscious effort.

I will speak to the Nahanni Butte park, for example. The boundaries there have been expanded probably six times since the park was created, leaving us to believe that there was not appropriate land reservation for the protection of the ecosystem in that particular area. I would say for the government to pay attention to the aboriginal people and the advice they are giving, because when they are talking about expanding the lot of land to protect a certain portion of the ecosystem, I can guarantee that nine times out of ten they are the experts and they know what they are talking about.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to ask a question to my colleague. I know she is a very caring person and very passionate in regard to northern Canada.

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She made reference to the 1970s when Pierre Elliott Trudeau played a role in the north and expressed a desire that we should be building upon our national parks. I wonder if the member could provide some comment. I find that over the last decade-plus, we have seen much keener interest from the public as a whole in doing more to promote and encourage our national parks system. Could she provide some comment in terms of the perception of Canadians' need to develop parks?

Ms. Yvonne Jones: Mr. Speaker, yes, it was former prime minister Trudeau who established the particular original park boundaries in Nahanni Butte. It was done to support the creation and expansion of a national parks system right across Canada.

If I had time, I could tell a story about the importance of protecting ecosystems like this because there are so many examples of where we did not have appropriate protection and where we have seen a decline in animal habitat. In my area we have terrible examples of how those things have happened.

I want to say that there is also room to have good economic and resource development, along with good ecosystem protection and preservation. It is key for governments to strike the balance and key for all of us to ensure we do it in an appropriate and proper way.

• (1630)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Order. It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands, The Environment.

[*English*]

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with great pleasure that I rise to speak to this particular bill.

I have had the privilege of living and working in Canada's north. This would provide yet another opportunity for other Canadians to travel to the north and not just learn about the richness of the beauty of the land, the wildlife, and the rushing rivers but also to meet with and get to know the first nations and Métis communities of our north.

I am pleased that the government is finally moving forward with the establishment of this park reserve. I am hopeful that it will soon be an actual national park, not just a park reserve. We shall see.

I am rising in support of Bill S-5, Nááts'ihch'oh national park reserve act. I understand it will be going to committee. I am hopeful that the government members of the committee will allow for as many people as possible to come forward who would like to speak to the matter.

That would certainly include the first nations and Métis people and other residents of the Northwest Territories, potentially those who think they might benefit from the tourism development, those who are concerned about the fate of grizzly bears and other threatened species and what might be necessary for the government to commit to actually making this happen.

This park reserve, like many, has been a long time in coming. My previous experience with the designation of parks in the north was during my tenure as the assistant deputy minister for renewable resources in Yukon. During that tenure, I had the privilege of working with first nations and Métis peoples in the negotiation of the first nation final agreements, a huge part of which was always the rights and interests of the aboriginal peoples of the north and how they could benefit from the settlement of those claims.

I sat in on many of those negotiations, which included the potential for designation of park boundaries. Among the more contentious issues was what happens when a national park is established. There can be a lot of benefits that come with the creation of a national park or a national park reserve, but it also means that some people might lose out.

In the case of this situation, as the member for Northwest Territories addressed very clearly, there has been some contention about the boundaries for this park and how much land would actually be set aside.

Typical to a lot of these discussions, particularly in the north where resource extraction is only just beginning, there is always the contention about whether or not there are pre-existing rights and interests that have been filed, or whether or not they might be filed in the future.

Clearly that was also part of the discussion about setting the actual boundaries for the setting aside of the Nááts'ihch'oh national park reserve.

There is also the issue of when the first nations may have rights or have previous rights, and it is always at the table. The Sahtu people had already finalized the first nations final agreement, so a lot of the decisions had already been made about the lands that were allotted to them and what might occur.

It is my understanding that all along, during the course of those negotiations and then also as negotiations continued on the establishment of this park reserve, they wanted to make sure that they might have rights and opportunities continued in this park.

To the credit of past governments, there have been some exceptions made. Certainly there were in Kluane National Park and Reserve. In that agreement they made some exceptions to what had happened normally in national parks.

We can recall in our history that, when Banff National Park and Jasper National Park were created, we basically booted the Métis and first nation peoples out of those parks. In fact, they have become the forgotten peoples. After the park was created, all we had was the heritage photos of when they used to have powwows.

Now, to the credit of the government, there have been arrangements made so that the first nation peoples can actually continue some activities and benefit from the establishment and development of this park.

As has been mentioned, this park, which is to be situated on the northern one-sixth of the South Nahanni River watershed, would cover almost 5,000 square kilometres. As has been mentioned previously, there was a lot of support for a slightly larger park, but I will speak later about why it was a matter of contention.

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•(1635)

Most significantly, this park would be situated by and large within the Tulita district of the Sahtu settlement area, and as I mentioned, this area has long been recommended for protection by the Sahtu during the course of the negotiation process. The creation of this national park reserve has long been supported not only by the Sahtu but also by the Dene and the Métis peoples of the Northwest Territories.

In 2012, an impact benefits agreement was entered into between the Government of Canada and the Sahtu, Dene, and the Métis. I am advised that discussions were also held with the Tulita Renewable Resource Council, which I understand was established under that first nation final agreement.

It is important to understand what that agreement signed onto in 2012 provided for. It acknowledged the right to continue the aboriginal harvest. Clearly, that was recognizing the prior existing rights of the aboriginal peoples in that area.

Second, it provides for co-operative management. The agreement was already made, pre-existing the creation of this national park reserve, that whatever would be created would provide for co-operative management between Parks Canada and the first nation and Métis peoples.

Third, under that agreement, the government guaranteed economic opportunities to the signatory communities, including contract work.

Also, there was an undertaking in 2012 to build in the Tulita community a national park office and a tourist reception centre.

As we heard when the member for the Northwest Territories spoke in this place, similar kinds of promises were made when there was the expansion of the Nahanni National Park in 2008, the first year I was elected. As I recall, I was NDP environment critic and was at committee when we discussed that agreement. I am very disappointed to hear that still those undertakings to build those facilities have not occurred. We can only hope that this time around the government will move more expeditiously on delivering on these undertakings.

Finally, under that impact and benefits agreement, there was an undertaking to build housing for the park workers, that those would be built by the local tradespeople, and that it would ensure at least eight local full-time jobs. There are some very specific undertakings, and we look forward to those being delivered for the benefit of the northern peoples.

When I asked the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment if any of these undertakings had been delivered on two years later, he replied that it is under discussion, or they will, or in other words, in the future. I repeat here again my concern. We are not simply talking about undertakings that might be in accordance with the bill that is before us—in other words, at a future point in time if the bill passes through committee and through this place and is agreed to. The point is that in 2012 the government already committed to take these actions, and we have not seen any action yet.

It is clear that we do not have to await the final passage and proclamation of the bill. The government has already committed to

those activities. It is clear that on the government side of the House members already committed to the creation of this park, to their credit. However, are they also committed to living up to the commitments they made in 2012? We hope so.

Also apparently under this 2012 agreement, the government committed to \$1.2 million annually for an operational budget for the park and \$50,000 per year for capital investments in Tulita. I guess the question will be to the government to respond to. I look forward to the Conservatives informing me following my speech of whether or not they have already begun to deliver some of these dollars. Clearly, if the creation of the park may be imminent, if any of the members in this place have ever spent time or lived and worked in the north, they know that there is a very short construction period and it would be great if we moved more expeditiously on creating those jobs in the north.

•(1640)

One thing is not clear to me, and it may well be under the 2012 agreement. One of the reasons the government members have given for why it is important to create this particular park reserve is that the current government is committed to the protection of threatened species, one of which in this area, apparently, is the grizzly bear. I guess we will all be looking toward future budgets. We know there have been ongoing cuts to the environment department and so there is less federal money there to actually act and protect threatened species.

I look forward to looking to the budget update and the budget next year to see if in fact there will be additional money, particularly to create jobs in the north, where first nation and Métis people, many of whom are technically trained, work side by side with Canadian wildlife scientists on actually tracking the grizzly, verifying what the population is now, and what needs to be done in the future to ensure that we protect this population within the park.

We certainly know from experience with the parks that already exist in Canada—certainly I know this from the parks in Alberta, particularly, in Jasper and Banff—that we are losing our grizzlies because of trains and because of traffic. I personally, so many times, have witnessed, to my chagrin, trucks and cars racing 20 or 30 kilometres above the speed limit where there is wildlife on the roads. Also, we have the problem where wildlife will interact with people who are visiting the parks.

It will be really important that Parks Canada also work very closely with the people of the north on defining the strategy to ensure we can attract tourism and, at the same time, protect these threatened species.

As my colleague the member for Northwest Territories has pointed out in this place, very clearly, very cogently, creation of parks is not a waste of resources. It actually helps to generate wealth for the country. It creates wealth for us because it actually can create tourism jobs.

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However, in order to do that, we actually need to invest in and support those who want to enter into that trade; many of those include tour operators. It is not easy to set up those operations. I know from my experience in Yukon that, in many cases, while there was an absolute right for the first nations to participate in some of those outfitting jobs of taking tourists out, they simply did not step up because they did not have the training, and they need encouragement.

I think it is a really important point. I am very concerned that the government is cutting back on tourism dollars. Frankly, I am even more concerned with the cutbacks to Parks Canada.

We hear this over and over again from Canadians and Canadian organizations that watch what is going on in national parks; and it is very serious that we cut the budget in 2012 to Parks Canada by \$29 million, over 7% of the budget, eliminating 638 positions.

If we are creating yet more parks where we can say, "I'm the Government of Canada; I created three new parks", we also have to ensure that what it is doing is ensuring it is continuing to manage properly and protect the parks we already have and the parks of the future.

I just wanted to speak on that issue again, and that goes to the choices that were put before the government and the options of what they set forward.

As the member for the Northwest Territories clarified for us, there were three options presented.

As I understand, these were the options presented to the community considering the park and also to the public, asking what they thought should occur.

As I understand, almost 93% of Canadians who took the time to respond in this consultation process wanted to go with the larger size of the park.

Now, why is that? It is because the information they were provided was that we need that amount of acreage or hectares to actually deliver on the intent of the park. I presume that also includes sufficient habitat for the grizzly, who actually travel long distances and need that much for harvesting and so forth.

• (1645)

I have worked a lot on the protection of watersheds. It is important that we not just set aside the Nahanni Park, but that we also set aside and protect the watershed that serves the Nahanni River so it can continue into the future.

I too share with my colleague from the Northwest Territories, and the Canadians who responded, the deep disappointment at the decision of the government, presumably for the protection of mining extraction, to narrow the scope of this park. That is not a sizeable difference, but still there obviously was some kind of a rational reason for setting that size originally.

I share with those who have said that the tourism industry is important to our country. My own province suffers when tourists do not come to Canada. When the rest of the world was severely suffering in the recession, Europe, the United States and Asia, fewer people were coming to our national parks. It is important that the

federal government, in partnership with the territorial government and with the bordering provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, put in dollars to help promote the northern parks and to encourage people to visit Canada. Our national parks, and the people who look after them, are probably the best emissaries that we have for our Canadian reputation.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to my colleague's speech. Her research is excellent. She obviously knows the file well and truly believes in protecting our environment. For that reason, I congratulate her.

[*English*]

There have been so many cuts at Environment Canada and Parks Canada in particular that one has to wonder what possible future these parks can have. We keep hearing from the government side that the creation of this reserve is an economic opportunity, but it sounds like it is more of an economic opportunity for the mining sector than it is for people who try to protect the environment.

With all of the cuts at Parks Canada, does my colleague feel Parks Canada has enough resources to develop this park properly?

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, the member asked a question that all Canadians should ask the government. We need to ensure that the national parks we have in place and the other wilderness protected areas are resourced sufficiently so they can deliver on their incorporated intent.

We already have a serious problem in the existing national parks, where the number of wardens and the jobs they fill have been cut back. We always have this pressure of the increasing commercialization of our national parks.

Given the cuts that I mentioned previously in my speech, I am deeply concerned at our capability to finance the protection of this park, particularly given that it is in a northern location.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier this afternoon my colleague from Scarborough—Guildwood raised the issue of the government's options. The option that it ultimately chose seemed to be the least supported of those that were provided to the government.

When the government is afforded an opportunity to look at improving our national parks system, one has to question why it chose that option as opposed to going for an option that would have added more square miles to our national parks, other areas of our great nation, that no doubt would have benefited tremendously by it, not only from an environmental point of view but from an economic point of view.

Would the member agree that the government might have been a bit premature in the option that it chose?

• (1650)

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the issue is premature, because the government has been dragging its heels in setting aside this park. I am glad it is finally bringing it forward.

Government Orders

My concern is this. I have sat through negotiations with respect to setting aside parks, including offshore parks, as a member of parliamentary committees. The government does not seem to recognize the need for a buffer zone. It is my understanding that one of the clear reasons for the larger size was to create a buffer zone between mining activity and the national park.

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have listened to the comments, but I want to put a couple of facts on the table, or reiterate them.

Protecting 4,895 square kilometres, Nááts'ihch'oh National Park is larger than 29 of Parks Canada's 43 other national parks. Only 14 parks are larger. It protects 70% of the South Nahanni River watershed that lies within the Sahtu Settlement Area, as well as important wildlife habitat for mountain woodland caribou, grizzly bears, Dall's sheep, mountain goats and Trumpeter swans.

I have heard some concern, which is legitimate, that the money has not been budgeted. However, I want to let the member know that in budget 2010 money was put aside for this park. Knowing that it is fully funded, will the member fully support the park?

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I am a little bit puzzled by the update here. I am not sure if in 2010, the government budgeted for the agreement that it was negotiating, which was signed in 2012. That would make sense.

Yes, more land is set aside for wildlife, but there are clear criteria for when we decide to set aside protection of a natural area for wildlife. Scientists know this. They may need to know what size of a range they need, and so forth.

Yes, it is good that some more habitat is set aside, but it is regrettable that the government not only did not listen to the scientists, it did not listen to the Canadian people.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to again thank my colleague for her speech. She brings a great deal of expertise to the House of Commons on parks, the environment and the best way to tackle this issue.

The Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment mentioned that it covers 75% of a watershed. A watershed must be protected in its entirety, and as my colleague was saying, there must be protected areas.

How would my colleague improve this bill in order to protect our parks and recognize them as national treasures?

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I will defer to my colleagues what should additionally be put in the bill at committee. I will certainly confer with them about how it could be changed.

Frankly, given the fact that there were direct negotiations and discussions with the first nations peoples, because of my experience in that area, I would be reluctant to in anyway suggest that something be opened up to which they had not agreed. That is why I would encourage the government to have open conversation when the bill goes to committee. In fact, it should probably be travelling to

the Sahtu as well and directly talking to the community about whether this satisfies its needs.

• (1655)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, of the three options for the park's area, it is unfortunate that the government chose the smallest area.

Could the member speak about the consultation process? Were people satisfied that the smallest option was chosen for the park? Was this proposal in keeping with what these people wanted, or did it come from the government?

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, in answering the question, I would like to suggest an alternative. Given that the majority of Canadians called for the larger size, perhaps it would be a reasonable compromise that the government commit to increasing the Parks Canada budget and specifically allot dollars to expedite the creation of this park and to market the development of its tourism to make up for the fact that it shortchanged the size of the park.

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine.

I am pleased to speak for a few minutes to this important bill, Bill S-5, an act to amend the Canada National Parks Act creating the Nááts'ihch'oh national park.

This is a process, and we recognize that the terms and conditions of the constitutionally-protected Sahtu land claim agreement have been met, including the creation of an impact benefit plan and a management committee. However, we have some concerns around the government's commitment to the park, and I will talk a bit about that.

The establishment of these parks on land and marine areas is all about meeting conservation targets, preserving biodiversity and, in this case, helping communities realize the economic and tourism potential that our national parks can provide.

Some of my colleagues have raised concerns about the government's commitment and whether it is carving up parks in Canada in such a way as to facilitate achieving two objectives: one, meet these constitutionally-required negotiations with first nations; and two, continue to allow resource development to go forward unabated.

It was suggested by someone involved in this process that the boundaries of this park were carved out in such a way as to ensure that a mine, almost in the middle of this territory, was kept out of the park and therefore would be allowed to continue to produce. These things are a concern.

As was mentioned by my colleagues, the Sahtu Dene Nation was involved in these negotiations. Three options were put on the table and one of those options was agreed to. While we have not heard a lot of complaint out of that area, questions have been asked as to why the smallest piece, in this case option 3, was chosen?

Government Orders

A few minutes ago my colleague for Edmonton—Strathcona asked why the government had not come forward and attached an additional commitment to this project. After a particular period of time, of five years or so, will it participate in discussions around expanding these boundaries? That would certainly give some of us some comfort as it relates to where the government is going with this.

The Parks Canada budget has been cut to a significant degree over the past few years. Budget cuts have led to a 33% staffing cut in science for Parks Canada, as one example. There have been 60 out of 179 positions eliminated. Talk about hampering Parks Canada's ability to carry out its responsibilities.

Infrastructure is in a desperate state. It is being reported constantly that infrastructure in Parks Canada is in serious need of investment, to the tune of hundreds of millions of dollars.

● (1700)

The government has not shown a willingness to invest in these important parts of Canadiana and Canadian infrastructure. In fact, it has been cutting back. The Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development has been reported as saying that there is a wide and persistent gap between what the government commits to and what it is achieving. When we go into a situation like this, it is important to note what the government is bringing in behind it.

This is a critical piece of territory. It is a large portion of the South Nahanni River watershed. My understanding is that option one, the bigger piece, would have ensured greater protection of that watershed to make sure that the health and well-being of the Nahanni River and the caribou would be adequately maintained. There is some concern that option three did not cut the mustard in terms of guaranteeing that the watershed was going to be protected, and it left out an important breeding ground for the caribou in this area.

My colleague from Northwest Territories knows this area well. He talked in his intervention about tourism. One of the commitments the government makes in negotiating agreements with the first nations community is economic benefits, economic development, and other ways to compensate for the change in the land use in an area like this. Part of that is tourism. As he so clearly stated, given his vast experience working in this area, Canada has done a terrible job promoting areas like this across the country.

The amount of advertising in the United States about tourism opportunities in Canada has basically dried up. The concern, of course, is what the government will do to ensure that those opportunities that are part of this agreement materialize for the first nations. It was indicated that a park had been formed close to seven years ago, and the government still has not followed up with the investments and infrastructure that is required.

That having been said, as I indicated earlier, we have not heard a great deal of concern expressed by people involved in this particular undertaking. However, we are looking forward to a more extensive discussion and to hearing experts at committee so that there may be a fuller discussion to examine what else can be done.

My colleague from Edmonton—Strathcona said it well when she said that in terms of making suggestions about what we can do to

make this bill better, it is better left to the representatives on the committee and the witnesses that will be called before the committee to make sure that sound recommendations come forward. Members can bet that members on that committee from the official opposition will certainly be in a position to offer helpful advice based on consultations they will have with the first nations communities involved in this particular endeavour.

As my colleagues have also indicated, I will be supporting moving Bill S-5 forward from second reading to committee.

● (1705)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we started off the day talking about a national park in suburban Toronto. Now we are winding up the day talking about another national park in rural northern territories. It just goes to show that it does not matter where people live in our vast land. They assign a great deal of value to our national parks. There is a growing expectation that the government will look at ways to continue to see our national parks grow. There needs to be a plan for the environment, the economics, and so forth.

I am wondering if my colleague in the New Democratic Party would provide his thoughts on how important it is that the national government have not only legislation for a national park. We have to make sure that we follow through to ensure that these parks mean more than just a piece of legislation, which Canadians expect when the Government of Canada declares that something is a national treasure.

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, the member for Winnipeg North is correct that Canadians are increasingly interested in issues of conservation and the need for biodiversity across our country. They are looking to the government to take steps to ensure that the ecosystem is protected. The government has failed in many respects. An example is the issue of marine protected areas. The government signed onto a UN agreement a couple of years ago committing itself to achieving the UN goal of having 10% of its coastal area protected as marine protected areas by 2020. That is six years away. At this stage, it is under 1%. Unfortunately, the government has not proven itself up to the task of making sure that it follows up on the commitments, whether it be this park, Rouge River park, or whatever it is. More has to be done.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I think it is quite appropriate that we have this conversation. Over and over again what we have been seeing from the members on the other side is that they only pick and choose what they want to hear so as to put the least amount on the table.

As members can see, based on the speeches in this House today, when it comes to the environment and the parks piece, we have many people on this side of the House who have a lot of experience, whether it is the members for Halifax, Edmonton—Strathcona, or the Northwest Territories. Our leader, the Leader of the Opposition, has the experience and proven leadership on environmental issues, because he served as a Quebec minister of the environment for a long period of time. We know that he resigned from cabinet because of the transfer of park lands.

Government Orders

I would ask my colleague to explain how important it is when committees meet that they consider the vital caribou breeding grounds as well as the protection of the Nahanni River.

• (1710)

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, my colleague talked about the experience and commitment to the environment, conservation, and biodiversity in the ecosystem that exists in our caucus. She is absolutely right. I know that my colleagues will bring that experience and knowledge to their work on committee to make sure that those issues with respect to the caribou, the Nahanni River, and the protection of the watershed will be very much part of their deliberations and questions and research as committee members.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured today to speak to Bill S-5, which would amend the Canada National Parks Act to create a reserve called Nââts'ihch'oh.

Parks are obviously very important to Canadians, and you can find them all over the country. Just today, the House has debated two bills on parks: the one we are discussing now, and the one we discussed earlier this morning to create an urban park in the Toronto area. This shows that Canadians are very interested in creating and preserving our parks and reserves in Canada.

When he was Quebec's environment minister, the leader of the New Democratic Party resigned and gave up his limo in order to protect Mont-Orford park. The Liberal government at the time wanted to sell the park—or at least part of it—to private interests. It was a shock and it was unacceptable. The leader of the NDP did the right thing. He protected the park, at the expense of his political career at the provincial level. Fortunately, this meant that we could snag him to come here, so that he could become the next prime minister of Canada. We think that was the right choice. Defending our parks is a fundamental value.

This bill would create a park in the Northwest Territories. The hon. member for the Northwest Territories did a great job of presenting and defending his stance. It is our duty to defend this bill and move forward. However, let us be clear: the bill has some serious flaws. It does not create a park. Rather, it creates two parts of a park. A road through the middle of the park will allow mining interests to continue mining tungsten. It is a rather unique situation, and we find it unfortunate.

This bill complies with the agreements signed in the north, which took more than seven years to negotiate. Thankfully, those negotiations resulted in the bill before us today. However, it is unfortunate that it did not go further. What is the reasoning behind creating a reserve or park if not to protect the fauna and flora? In this case, the government is trying to find a way to develop natural resources instead of creating a park that will protect the caribou and the other species in the area.

The loss of biodiversity in the world is very disturbing. We need to take measures today to ensure that Canada does not lose any more biodiversity, especially since Canada is recognized around the world as a country that believes in protecting the environment. Unfortunately, this bill suggests that the Conservative government seems to

have forgotten that Parks Canada's mandate is to preserve the environment, not exploit it.

Naturally, people in the region are interested in the fact that this will create natural wealth and the idea that there may be a multiplier effect on the economy. We see this across Canada: parks have a considerable impact on wealth and tourism. In other areas where Parks Canada has unfortunately had to cut its budget—because of the Conservative government's massive budget cuts—the agency can no longer carry out its mandate or really help spur economic growth.

Here is an example from back home in the Gaspé. Forillon National Park is now closed all winter, period. No services are available. Unfortunately, the current government is not a partner in economic growth. I also want to point out that to get to Forillon National Park, you have to take a plane, the train or a bus.

• (1715)

Unfortunately, the government is not stepping up in that regard either. There is no bus to get there, the railway is in terrible condition, and the train no longer goes there. The government needs to come up with a budget for Parks Canada that makes sense so that the bill before us can have a real and lasting impact.

I would now like to go over some Parks Canada figures. Really, these numbers are pretty scary. As everyone knows, Parks Canada cut 638 jobs in the 2012 fiscal year. Its budget was cut by 7.1%, which is a lot of money.

The *Toronto Star* reported that Parks Canada has been putting off close to \$3 billion in repairs. There is a total of \$2.8 billion in deferred work. That means buildings are falling down.

Getting back to Forillon National Park, I hope that the people of the Northwest Territories will look closely at what is happening in other national parks so that they can be prepared for the Conservatives' lack of support for this park. The federal government has more or less abandoned Forillon National Park. The buildings are in poor shape, and all of the expropriated houses in the park are falling down too.

Hon. members will recall that 40 years ago, when the park was created by the federal Liberal government, it found a rather unique way to create the park: it partnered with the province. The province owns the park, and the federal government manages it. Unfortunately, the federal government has abandoned its role as manager. Now, the owner, namely the provincial government, has no regulatory or statutory power to spend money to improve it. The Conservative government has a duty to improve the park, but it is not doing so.

Today, the government wants to create a park in the Northwest Territories. I hope that the people there will take note that the government often is nowhere to be found when it comes time to provide support.

I would like to point out some shortcomings and share the concerns of some experts. This is what Alison Woodley, of the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, had to say about the park's creation:

Government Orders

• (1720)

[English]

—the park boundary proposed in Bill S-5 will not achieve this conservation goal because it leaves out much of the important habitat for woodland caribou, including critical calving and breeding grounds, as well as for grizzly bears and Dall's sheep. It leaves out a significant part of the Little Nahanni River, which is a major tributary of the South Nahanni River and includes some of the most important habitat in the area.

This is the part that I thought particularly interesting: “Bill S-5 falls short of being a significant conservation achievement”. Again, that is from CPAWS, an organization known for its proper management of parks. It has helped the government establish parks and sustain parks in the past, and in this particular case, it has made it clear that the project we have in front of us simply does not measure up.

We need more and more stringent commitments on the part of the government to make sure that this park would fulfill the needs and the obligations that the government negotiated through the various treaties and through the court obligations that were imposed upon it.

Unfortunately, I do not think the government quite understands that when it has an obligation, it is expected to fulfill it with all due support, with all due money and with all due resources that should come to bear on the project. This is not one of those cases. It is the beginning. It is simply a beginning. We are going to have to go an awful lot further to make sure that this project would have long-term success.

Fortunately, the best outcome for this project, for the bill, is that we do adopt it. At least it would go to committee and we would try to improve on it. However, if we adopt it as is, certainly the most beneficial thing would be that when the NDP does form a government, we would be able to improve it so that it is a real park that we can really be proud of.

[Translation]

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I congratulate my esteemed colleague on his speech. It is obvious that he loves his riding.

He spoke about several problems in his riding that are being ignored by the current government. That is also happening in my riding, where there are many parks and reserves. They have financial problems every year. Even Charlevoix, which is a UNESCO biosphere reserve, has seen its revenues decline dramatically.

Today, this region could lose its UNESCO status because it no longer fulfils one of the main criteria, namely co-operation with the community. The federal and provincial governments are important partners in that respect.

This bill is all well and good and quite appealing, but what good is it to create parks if we do not protect and take care of them? These parks do not have the means to promote and protect their land.

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question, because he raised some very important points.

Parks Canada will have to face a number of challenges in order to fulfill its mandate. I will share the figures that were recently published in the *Toronto Star*.

[English]

Operational cuts in the budget for 2012-13 will be in the order of \$6 million; in 2013-14, close to \$20 million; in 2014-15, almost \$30 million. These are permanent cuts to Parks Canada. They are cuts to the direct services that Parks Canada offers to the public. These services are forever eliminated by the Conservative budgets.

We need to make sure that Parks Canada is able to fulfill its mandate effectively. With the cuts that are being imposed on it, we are simply not going to be able to do that. This park needs more support than this bill is going to offer.

It is a good first step, but we need to go an awful lot further.

Hon. John Duncan (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to say I am somewhat familiar with Nááts'ihch'oh, having been on site when we made the announcement some time ago.

Listening to the debate, I recognize that there is a complete misunderstanding about the level of community support and the things that are required in order to ensure that this park will be the jewel that it very much is. There was obviously a balance that had to be achieved. There were serious negotiations that involved first nations as well as the government of the territory.

These comments are made in a vacuum in this place, but is there an understanding based on actually being there? I do not recognize any of these comments as being valid.

• (1725)

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, I thank the Chief Government Whip for the comments. I certainly do not agree with them.

To bring context back to the Northwest Territories, let us quote the former premier of the Northwest Territories, Stephen Kakfwi, who said, “He has taken the heart right out of it. The middle of it is carved out so that mining can happen dead centre in the middle of the proposed national park.”

Let us put something concrete in our discussions here. I think the government whip should have a little more respect for the former premier of the Northwest Territories. He certainly has a lot of problems with the bill that we have in front of us. The Chief Government Whip should have interest in making sure that he takes heed of these comments and offers some amendments to this bill to improve it.

[Translation]

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the member for Chambly—Borduas. I must inform the member that he will have just three minutes for his speech.

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will use my three minutes to quickly say that we will support Bill S-5 because it is a step in the right direction. However, as all my colleagues have pointed out this afternoon, the bill has some flaws that we hope can be fixed in committee.

Private Members' Business

My colleagues have already given some examples, but I want to illustrate these flaws with some examples from my own riding of the government's mismanagement when it comes to reserves, environmental protection and budget allocations for Parks Canada.

The easiest examples would be Fort Chambly and the Fryer dam. I am currently looking into this to see whether the government has any plans. These two properties belong to Parks Canada. Even though Fort Chambly is a historic site from the War of 1812, it did not receive anything at all, because the francophone aspect was completely ignored. Charles de Salaberry went from Chambly all the way to Châteauguay for the Battle of Châteauguay. During the War of 1812, he was the only francophone commander. Despite that, absolutely nothing was received to improve the infrastructure that belongs to Parks Canada. That is a perfect example.

The other example I mentioned is the Fryer dam. In fact, it is a dyke, as the historical society likes to remind me all the time. My predecessor, Phil Edmonston, an NDP MP, worked hard on this file in 1990. This has been dragging on for a long time under Liberal and Conservative governments. On the ground, officials at Parks Canada—which has an office for eastern Quebec in Chambly—and the municipalities are willing to work on improving this infrastructure, but the budgets have been cut.

In the minute I have remaining, I want to provide one last example. As my colleague mentioned just now, we are talking about biospheres. Mont Saint-Hilaire is the first UNESCO-designated biosphere site in Canada. It received its designation in the 1970s. Fortunately, with the participation of the Gault Nature Reserve of McGill University and thanks to the tremendous work done by members of the public, a greenbelt has been secured. That is good for the environment and for the economy because we are protecting our orchards, which are a major tourist draw in the region. If it were not for the public, the university and the volunteers who work at the nature centre, the cuts would be unbearable, as my colleague said.

This is another example of the government's mismanagement when it comes to protecting the environment, protecting tourism in our regions and, most of all, properly equipping the people at Parks Canada so that we can celebrate our heritage. The government says that all these things are its priorities, but unfortunately, the reality on the ground is quite different, especially in Quebec.

• (1730)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The time for government orders today has expired. The hon. member will have time remaining when this matter next returns before the House.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[Translation]

SERVICE CANADA MANDATE EXPANSION ACT

The House resumed from June 12 consideration of the motion that Bill C-247, An Act to expand the mandate of Service Canada in respect of the death of a Canadian citizen or Canadian resident, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-247 on behalf of the residents of Sherbrooke. I would like to commend the hon. member for Guelph, the sponsor of the bill, on his initiative. In a nutshell, the bill seeks to provide a single point of contact for people who are acting on behalf of a Canadian citizen or resident who has passed away. Essentially, the bill would provide people who have lost a loved one with a single point of contact with the federal government. This single point of contact would fall under the responsibility of Service Canada.

Rather than contacting a number of departments when a loved one dies, Canadians would have a single point of contact, which would help them to do what they need to do more easily and efficiently. Departments have difficulty talking to each other. I think that the least we can do is provide quick and efficient service to Canadians who have lost a loved one. Canadians who are dealing with this type of situation should have the best service from every level of government. It is imperative that those who are grieving and dealing with emotional or financial stress get the best service possible from the federal government.

I believe that a government's first duty is to serve the people. Given that people pay income tax and other taxes every year, they expect to receive reliable, high-quality service, especially when they find themselves in a situation as difficult as losing a loved one and they have to inform the Canada Revenue Agency, for example. If the deceased was receiving a federal pension as a veteran, then Veterans Affairs also must be informed. These examples illustrate everything that grieving loved ones have to do when someone dies. I think it is important to commend the initiative to create a single point of contact, which would make things easier.

As I mentioned, these services are essential, and the government needs to pay more attention to them. I unfortunately need to remind the House that services have not been a priority for successive governments in recent years. I am pleased to see that the House, or at least my Liberal colleague, wants better services from the government.

Over the past three years, Sherbrooke has seen many cuts to services. The Canada Revenue Agency closed all of its offices in Sherbrooke. The office is still there, but many employees have been the victims of these cuts. The office is now closed to the public. No one can go there to ask questions or meet with a CRA agent. The only thing that happens when you go to the CRA office in Sherbrooke is that you get a door slammed in your face. They will give you the 1-800 number, but you could have called from home. People have to figure things out themselves, because there is no one there to help them.

Private Members' Business

The same is true at Citizenship and Immigration Canada, which has closed its office in Sherbrooke for good. This is causing problems for newcomers who are looking for service from the federal government, specifically Citizenship and Immigration Canada. They have to go to Montreal, which is about an hour and 45 minutes away by car, depending on traffic, to write their citizenship exam or even for their swearing-in ceremony.

• (1735)

There has been a dramatic cut in services in Sherbrooke in recent years. That is why I am emphasizing the need for better service to Canadians.

I believe this bill is a step in that direction. We will be able to examine some of the little details of this bill in committee, and I am certain that all of the parties will work together to do that. For example, the name of the department in question has changed since this bill was introduced. This is a small amendment we could make. The committee will certainly have other suggestions as to how to improve this bill, which has a laudable objective. We want to help people who are grieving to get the best service possible from their government.

This is a problem that my constituents in Sherbrooke and I are familiar with. People have to call a number of different departments to inform them of changes to their personal information because the departments at the same level of government do not talk to each other. That is a problem for grieving Canadians who have to settle the affairs of a deceased loved one.

This single point of contact is a good solution that should be adopted by the entire federal bureaucracy. People would have to notify only one public servant of any changes, and that information would be shared with all of the departments.

However, we must ensure that this single point of contact is not just accessible online, so that it is not difficult to access. In most cases, seniors are the ones who will need this service, and not all of them are comfortable using the Internet.

If this bill is passed, it will be important that this service not be limited to a website because not everyone has easy access to the Internet and not everyone feels comfortable using new technologies. It is important to think about those people.

The federal government is already heading in that direction. It is trying to put everything online. That is a problem for people who do not have the resources or the ability to handle these things online. The government will have to remember that if this bill is ever implemented.

In closing, I would like to thank the member for Guelph for his initiative. It is good to think about service to the public, which should always be the government's main purpose. The government must provide quality service for people who pay their taxes every year and expect that kind of service from the federal government. The least the government can do is provide a single point of contact to grieving people who have to settle the affairs of someone who has passed away.

• (1740)

[English]

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-247, a truly practical piece of legislation brought forward by the eminently pragmatic member of Parliament for Guelph.

Before putting my name on the ballot, I had the good fortune of having a couple of careers, one in the management of a regional law firm and the other in a family business. One of the lessons I took with me to Parliament Hill was that a good employer always hires employees who are smarter than he is. Now, in my case, that leaves a lot of options. I say that just to draw light to the very capable employees I have in my constituency office.

There is a steady stream of people who come in to the constituency office with a wide variety of problems that need to be dealt with, but there are a couple of things that are consistent. Number one is their emotional state. They are generally frustrated about having to try to navigate the bureaucracy. The other, with the exception of passports, is the importance to them of the problem they have come to our office to talk to us about. It is generally the most important thing that is happening in their lives at that time.

They are stuck in this situation. They have generally tried other avenues to solve the problem. Their first recourse was not to the member of Parliament's office. They come into an MP's office, in my case, my constituency office. I am very fortunate to have very capable staff there.

I say this because the case for Bill C-247 is strong. It would require the Minister of Employment and Social Development to implement all measures necessary to establish Employment and Social Development Canada as the single point of contact for the Government of Canada in respect of all matters relating to the death of a Canadian citizen or a Canadian resident.

In my opinion, this bill is a perfect example of how federal representation works in Canada. We are here, in Ottawa, representing a diverse collection of voices, bringing forward the concerns or issues identified within our constituencies and translating those concerns and issues into federally legislated solutions.

It is not always easy to identify how to fix what seems like an individual problem with federal legislation, but I believe that the member for Guelph has done just that with Bill C-247.

The death of a loved one is never easy. If we, in this House, can do our part to lessen the burden of responsibility that falls to someone who is grieving, then we should absolutely do just that.

It was reassuring to read the previous speeches on the bill from back in June of this year and to see that most, not all but most, members had only constructive and valuable things to add to this debate in a sincere effort to strengthen the bill. With this in mind, I hope to see the entire House support sending this bill to committee.

It is evident that the research for the bill is thorough and sound. The evidence the member for Guelph is relying upon comes from various well-known, reliable sources, including the 2013 fall report of the Auditor General. In that report, the notification of death is specifically mentioned on page 12:

When a death occurs...someone must contact each department separately and follow different processes, as this information is not generally shared and departments do not offer the ability to do this online. This makes it difficult for users who may be trying to stop the payment of certain benefits to prevent overpayments...while trying to apply for others....

Perhaps the only situation worse than not receiving full benefits from a federal program is receiving too much, due to administrative errors, and then being told, "Sorry, you have to pay that money back". This is an extremely difficult circumstance to be found in when a person is also dealing with the loss of someone they love.

Other members who have spoken to the bill have made reference to the various federal departments that would need to be contacted about the death of a Canadian citizen or a Canadian resident. There are a few that stood out to me, namely Veterans Affairs and Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

● (1745)

As we know, cuts to Service Canada have drastically altered the level of service across the country, and my province has not been spared. When the government decided to cut the civil service by about 5%, the level of the cuts was double that in my province. We no longer have a district Veterans Affairs office; we no longer have a Citizenship and Immigration office; we no longer have in-person counter service at the Canada Revenue Agency; and we have never had a passport office.

I am not bringing this up in an attempt to slight the Conservative government—though I have in the past and I reserve the right to do so in the future at every opportunity—but as an alternative argument to the potential value of Bill C-247 and the positive impacts it might have if it were enacted.

With fewer staff available to assist Canadians through an already painful process of grieving a loved one, it makes sense to streamline the process and simplify the administrative burden, both for those grieving and for the Service Canada employees. Due to the cuts to front-line personnel and the closure of federal offices in Prince Edward Island, my office tends to receive much of the overflow from Service Canada. I can say with confidence that the effects of the administrative burden can be absolutely devastating, particularly when it involves the repayment of funds that I just mentioned.

Sending this bill to committee would allow members to hear from public servants themselves as to what the actual implementation would look like and whether or not the proposed timelines were realistic and attainable. My colleague the member for Guelph has already indicated that he is open to reasonable amendments that would strengthen the bill.

Realistically, I think we can all agree that the bill is sound. In fact, much of it was drafted with the current government's plans and priorities in mind. Allow me to quote from the 2014-15 reports on plans and priorities from Employment and Social Development Canada, as well as that of the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat. In the Minister of Employment and Social Development's message, he stated:

ESDC will focus on achieving service excellence for Canadians by further modernizing service delivery, focusing on its core business priorities and increasing the use of technology. Through Service Canada, [the government] will ensure that Canadians quickly receive the benefits to which they are entitled and access to a wide range of programs and services.

Private Members' Business

Further, at page 61 of that report, it says:

Service Canada will continue to work with other departments so that Canadians can better access more Government of Canada services through Service Canada.

In his message in the report on plans and priorities from the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, the president stated:

Canadians need and deserve a public service that is equipped to deliver modern, cost effective and responsive programs and services....

...we will continue to streamline government operations.

For the period 2014-17, the report states that the secretariat will:

...promote client-centred service;...efficiency through a whole-of-government approach to service delivery....

It is a fine day when we, as members of the opposition parties, can stand in the House and say that we share a priority of the government. In this case, it is a good priority, so we can absolutely support it with Bill C-247.

In addition to aligning with the current priorities of those respective government departments, the impact of Bill C-247 could potentially save the government millions of dollars. The savings in this case would be in the form of costs to the federal government for overpayments due to improper death notifications, as well as the cost to the federal government in retrieving benefit overpayments.

The member for Guelph, as well as a few other members of the House, referenced the success of this kind of initiative elsewhere in the world, specifically in France with its online service portal, mon service public, and the United Kingdom's Tell Us Once. In the United Kingdom, the savings are estimated to be an incredible \$300 million over 10 years.

Of course, I want to reiterate that the savings are not just financial but also administrative in nature. As my colleague stated in his June speech, this is also good consumer legislation.

Some of the members who have spoken to this bill previously mentioned that they have some concerns with respect to privacy, and well they should. For this reason, I say send it to committee, let the Privacy Commissioner appear as a witness, and let us see how the privacy concerns can be addressed.

● (1750)

In closing, this bill is non-partisan, evidence-based, financially responsible, and immensely practical. It deserves our support and further study at committee.

In Canada, 80% of the care provided to ailing seniors is given by their loved ones. A citizen of this country should not be required to jump through administrative hoops in order to settle the accounts of someone they are still grieving.

I hope we will do our part to alleviate the stress on our constituents by voting in support of Bill C-247.

Mr. Scott Armstrong (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to participate in this debate concerning Bill C-247, presented by my hon. colleague, the member for Guelph.

Private Members' Business

First let me say how much I appreciate the time and effort that the hon. member has put into drafting this bill. I would also like to thank the member for his willingness to collaborate with us on potential changes that we can work together on to continue to strengthen the proposed piece of legislation.

Currently the bill is somewhat technical. It is a proposal that would make Service Canada the single point of contact in the Government of Canada for reporting the death of a Canadian citizen or a Canadian resident. Service Canada would then, in the words of the bill, have responsibility "...in respect of all matters relating to the death" of that person.

At first glance, the proposal seems very straightforward. The intent of making things simpler for the relatives of a deceased person is a laudable goal and one we fully support. Cutting red tape for grieving families is something I believe all parties should get behind and support strongly.

As we examine the bill as it is written, there are some costs and practical consequences that are not necessarily straightforward, and they will need to be considered during the committee hearings.

Currently Bill C-247 would require any federal program that wants to be notified of a death to become the authorized user of the social insurance number, since the number would be required to ensure the complete and accurate matching of client information. Without this number, errors and incorrect stoppage of benefits or services could occur, and we all want to avoid that.

Although the bill's intent is to enable citizens and residents to communicate only with Service Canada to resolve any outstanding issues related to a death, it would also expand the mandate of Service Canada to include the responsibility of notifying a host of other departments and other programs. This would happen as soon as the estate of the deceased person informed Service Canada of the death.

Since the social insurance number is an important piece of information linked to an individual's identity, expanding the process to include other programs that do not currently have the authority to collect and receive information linked to the social insurance number is something that we need to resolve and give careful consideration to before making any changes in that area.

As well, to implement the bill as proposed, processes would need to be established to ensure that we are receiving the information from the right person: the representative of the estate. This would require verifying both the person's identity and their authority to represent the estate of the deceased. The individual would need to bring the proper identification and documentation. This would create a cumbersome process for individuals dealing with the death of a loved one. We want to avoid that at all costs.

We think it is best if we work to improve the system that is currently in place. This would ensure that the privacy of Canadians would be protected while providing a streamlined approach for death notification. That is why we intend to introduce friendly amendments to the bill in committee to address the problems I mentioned and to make this a stronger piece of legislation. The amendments we are proposing would ensure that key Government of Canada programs that require death information are authorized to use the social insurance number.

We also have some concerns that a hard deadline might drive up costs and at times would not be realistic, but to ensure that the progress is tracked, we will be proposing that annual reporting to Parliament be included as part of this bill. In addition, we are advancing an incremental approach to improve notification of death services in a client-focused procedure.

The bill has shown that Service Canada has a long way to go in communicating with Canadians on the processes that are currently in place. I will not go into detail on the current processes, as they were discussed during the first hour of debate, but I can say that in the short term we will be improving communications and developing a strategy to give Canadians easier access to the relevant information they need when a death of a loved one takes place.

Service Canada will update its website and clarify the messaging regarding the steps to follow in the event of the death of a Canadian resident or Canadian citizen. This will include listing the federal programs and departments currently informed of the passing of an individual and what steps should be taken, including informing other programs and other departments. Examples would be the Department of Fisheries and Oceans for fishing licences and the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development for Indian status cards.

• (1755)

At the same time, Service Canada will work with key stakeholders, including the Funeral Service Association of Canada, to explore ways that the estate or survivors can be better informed.

The department will develop an outreach strategy to tell survivors which federal programs and departments are automatically informed and which ones they need to inform. The department will set out what benefits survivors may be eligible for and for which ones they may need to apply.

Over the longer term, we intend to work with programs and departments to gradually eliminate the need for separate notification procedures and to continue working to develop a government-wide approach that will be more efficient and eliminate any duplication.

We are committed to the highest level of and efficiency in service delivery. The government is constantly looking for ways to improve service delivery and making the best use of taxpayer dollars.

I am pleased that my colleague across the way who brought the bill forward is open to constructive amendments. We are going to work together constructively and collaboratively to deliver the best legislation on behalf of all Canadians.

I hope my colleagues will find these amendments to be acceptable and join us in voting in favour of the bill at second reading.

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to support the bill put forward by my colleague from Guelph.

I do not usually use the word brilliant, but in some sense I think this is a brilliant bill, brilliant in its simplicity. Simplicity is not a bad thing. Often the best things in life are simple and sometimes when somebody proposes a new idea that is simple, people will say that it is obvious, or they will ask why it was not done before. This legislation has those two characteristics. Why have we not had one-stop shopping of this kind for many years? Why did we not think of that before? Maybe someone has thought of it before, but it is new to me, and it would be an excellent addition to Canadian law.

The points have been made that the person whose loved one has just died is not in a happy state, to put it mildly, and the prospect of having to make a substantial number of calls to government bureaucracies to answer different questions about the death of one's wife, or husband or whomever is not a happy prospect. Given the cutbacks, the prospect of being on a 1-800 line and having to wait forever to even get any answer at all is not a happy thought. Therefore, the possibility of just going to one place and having experts there who know exactly how to do it would relieve a huge amount of stress and anxiety from those who are the least able to be in such positions of stress.

[*Translation*]

In my opinion, this is a great bill because when someone loses a family member, he or she is not prepared to telephone all the government bureaucracies to share the information with public servants.

If all of that can happen in one fell swoop, it is better for everyone.

• (1800)

[*English*]

As my colleague has suggested, there are subsidiary benefits, which are definitely secondary to the primary one of helping individual Canadians. However, it could save the government money. It could save lawyers and estates from money going down the wrong paths. It could make it less likely that there would be issues of overpayment, and so on.

I was pleased with the government's response. If we could work in such a collegial way on other things as the way we worked on this bill, this would be a better place. That would be perhaps hoping too much, but I think the parliamentary secretary's response in tone was excellent, co-operative, and collegial.

The devil is in the details and I will certainly defer to my colleague from Guelph as to whether what he is proposing is precisely right. As far as I know, everyone in the House is on the same page and in favour, and we should all work together to make this happen in the most efficient and effective manner.

Having blossomed forth on how collegial we are, let me turn to a slightly different issue, which is perhaps a little less collegial.

In an ideal world, we should have one-stop shopping for both federal and provincial government agencies because no doubt, when an individual dies, the successor has to contact provincial governments, even municipal governments, as well as the federal government. If we could have one-stop shopping for all three levels of government, what a wonderful world this would be.

Private Members' Business

I remember back in the late days of the Liberal government that I had some involvement with Service Canada, which we were promoting as a new agency. Our idea at the time was to begin at the federal level but then to work with provincial governments and try to do what I just described, which is one-stop shopping across levels of government.

Maybe if a Liberal government were still in power, we would be there today and were that the case, my colleague might have been able to introduce a bill that would go to all levels of government. I am not sure we would have reached municipalities even eight years later, but we might have at least incorporated provinces and then it would be even easier for the loved ones of someone who died.

Unfortunately, Service Canada has gone in the wrong direction. We hear all the time about people being stuck forever on 1-800 numbers wanting employment insurance and things of that nature. Therefore, the service has not blossomed forth to include at least two levels of government, but rather, seems to have become more and more difficult to administer for just this one level of government.

I suppose that is a challenge for the future, but I think in the longer term maybe the hon. member, in a few years time, perhaps after there is a government of a different stripe to put this thing in order, will be able to provide amendments to his bill that would extend it to include not just the federal government but provincial governments as well.

That is a longer term proposition. For the moment, we, of all parties, should be pleased at this very important and major first step toward one-stop shopping for the benefit of the loved ones of those who have died.

There is so much consensus on this that I need not take up my full 10 minutes. My colleague from Charlottetown has explained extremely clearly as to what the benefits are, so I do not want to belabour the point.

• (1805)

Mr. Colin Mayes (Okanagan—Shuswap, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Guelph for tabling private member's Bill C-247. I am pleased to have the opportunity to participate in the debate.

The time and the effort that the hon. member has put into drafting the bill is certainly commendable. The parliamentary secretary, my colleague, has put forward an argument that Service Canada has been working to provide online service and to update our systems to ensure that Canadians are served better and quicker. Changes take time, but this bill is just another step that would improve that service and make it more timely for Canadians.

Bill C-247, an act to expand the mandate of Service Canada in respect of the death of a Canadian citizen or Canadian resident, if adopted, will make Service Canada the single point of contact to report the death of a loved one to the federal government.

Private Members' Business

If I were to take a quick look at Bill C-247, it would seem to be a straightforward proposal, and I have no doubt it has been developed with the best intention. At first glance, Bill C-247 looks like a good idea as it seems to make things easier for people who need to notify the federal government of the death of a relative. However, when we examine the bill more closely, we quickly realize that the legislation, as it is written, could be improved. We look forward to working with the member for Guelph to make some common sense changes at committee.

When we look at the bill, I would like to remind my colleagues that the information on births and deaths in Canada falls under the jurisdiction of the provinces and the territories. Currently, provincial and territorial governments maintain birth and death registries and they are administered by vital statistics agencies. All provinces, except one, Saskatchewan, which is expected to join the system within the next two years, send Service Canada daily death information through secure electronic channels, under the vital events linkages agreements. Then Service Canada relays this information to all the federal departments and agencies that are duly authorized to receive it.

This two-step information sharing process is demonstrably reliable and has proven to be secure to protect the private information of all Canadians. In fact, it is a great example of a partnership that works.

Of course, as with any system, there is always room for improvement. That is why Service Canada will continue to work with the provinces and territories, as well as with various partners and stakeholders, to improve the vital events linkages and accelerate the processes involved in disclosing information.

As a House, we have the responsibility to consider all the possible repercussions for the privacy of Canadians. We cannot treat this lightly. The privacy of Canadians is too important to be played with. This is exactly what we are doing by recommending amendments to Bill C-247. We are looking at how we can improve the bill and make it better legislation.

As the member for Cumberland—Colchester—Musquodoboit Valley has stated, we intend to introduce several amendments in committee study to make the bill stronger. The member who submitted the bill recognizes the co-operation of the government and is very willing to participate.

In the meantime, the bill has shown that Service Canada needs to do better at communicating with Canadians. Currently, there is work ongoing to update the Service Canada website. It will soon provide clearer messages on the steps to follow to notify the federal government of the death of a loved one. Service Canada's website will soon highlight which federal programs and departments are automatically informed of the passing of an individual and which departments and programs might need to be informed directly.

Service Canada will also work in consultation with funeral directors and other stakeholders to develop an outreach strategy, so Canadians are even better informed on this matter.

• (1810)

Service Canada will continue working with departments and programs to progressively move toward a simplification of the death

notification process. I am pleased to see and support an initiative that cuts red tape for grieving families. Basically, we agree with the intent of the hon. member's bill. We need to do this the right way.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I did give it a great deal of thought before I put forward this bill. Members can sit in this house for quite some time and never have an opportunity to introduce a private member's bill, debate it, and hopefully see it pass. I wanted to ensure that the bill I put forward would have an impact on the lives of Canadians and also would be something members from all parties could indeed come together on and support. For those reasons, it was my great pleasure to introduce a bill that would establish Service Canada as the single point of contact relating to the death of a Canadian citizen or resident.

The death of a loved one is not an easy time for any of us, so I am certainly glad to put forward a non-partisan bill that would create a practical, compassionate approach to helping Canadians through a very difficult time.

I am grateful to all MPs who contributed so constructively to this debate, especially the Minister of State for Social Development, whose genuine interest and collaboration were essential. Also, I thank the members for Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, Saint-Lambert, Cape Breton—Canso, Brant, Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, Don Valley East, Sherbrooke, Charlottetown, Markham—Unionville, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Employment and Social Development, and the member for Okanagan—Shuswap.

With reference to the remarks made by the member for Markham—Unionville, indeed, this idea, with all humility, was not my own. It was in fact the idea of Bryon Wilfert, who first brought the idea before Parliament but did not have the opportunity to navigate it through the House.

What I have heard from Canadians, industry stakeholders, and members alike is clear: the existing system for notifying the federal government of the death of a Canadian citizen or permanent resident can and must be improved. The program must be made more efficient for the grieving family on the one end, who should only have to tell government once of a death, and in the interests of the government on the other.

The process of notifying all the necessary government authorities when a loved one passes away can be tedious, confusing, and sometimes overwhelming, but it is also an often painful process at a very sensitive time. It is a disservice to everyone when Canadians are unaware of what processes currently exist, preventing them from receiving adequate services and assistance while bereaved.

What the bill would accomplish by establishing a single point of contact at Service Canada would be the removal of uncertainty and confusion for family members and estate administrators. Similarly, as a public policy gain, I believe that it would modernize service delivery and reduce duplication and thereby reduce costs. As was said by the member for Charlottetown, a similar system in the United Kingdom, Tell Us Once, has saved \$300 million over 10 years.

*Adjournment Proceedings***ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS**

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*English*]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have a duty to be a good father and to protect my daughters. That is why I have to care about climate change. I must say that I condemn the Conservative government for its intentional negligence on climate change.

My question in question period was about the urgency with which the current government treats climate change. We know that the oil and gas sector in Canada accounts for about one-quarter of the emissions of greenhouse gases in Canada. It is the fastest-growing sector of our greenhouse gas emissions in Canada, and the Conservatives have promised some sort of regulation on that sector since 2008, six years ago. However, at this time our minister still refuses to give a timeline for the regulation of the oil and gas sector, and we learned a couple of weeks ago from science reporter Mike De Souza that Environment Canada appears to have even stopped meeting with oil and gas companies.

The Conservatives like to talk about Canada shutting down coal plants and achieving progress in reducing emissions from the electrical power generation sector. Today we heard a piece of good news, that the Boundary Dam coal-fired power plant in Canada is now going to be built in about a year, and that this carbon capture facility will be operational and will attempt to sequester about 90% of the greenhouse gas emissions coming out of one of the units of the Boundary Dam generation facility. I do sincerely hope that this attempt turns out to be the breakthrough in feasibility for carbon capture and sequestration. It is a very difficult technology, and the past projects have been abandoned because the feasibility could not be demonstrated. It was too expensive. However, we have to keep trying and I do sincerely hope that this Canadian project will succeed in feasibility. If anybody can do it, I know that Canada can do it.

However, the big decrease in the amount of emissions from coal plants cannot be accredited to the current government. It is the government of the Province of Ontario that deserves that credit. Earlier this year, the very last kilowatt hour of electricity generated from coal was put out, and now Ontario electricity is free from coal; free from the greenhouse gas emissions of coal-fired generation, free from the mercury emissions and all the other emissions that come from burning coal and the impurities that we find in coal. It is the first North American jurisdiction to phase out coal-fired power.

The current government, in the transportation sector, pretty much has followed the lead of California. It has taken credit in the electrical power generation sector for the hard work that the Ontario government has done, and in the oil and gas sector it has simply delayed. There is no leadership from the current government. There is no urgency. The current government is not protecting our children.

What I have heard from my colleagues in their comments here in the House and elsewhere is that these are common sense changes, and this is a common sense piece of legislation that they would like to see succeed, regardless of political stripe. That does not mean there cannot be changes made. Some speakers highlighted areas of the bill that could use some modification, and I am pleased to say that I have begun work with the government on ways we can strengthen the bill to ensure that all parties can support it.

If passed at second reading, I look forward to a full discussion of the bill at committee. I remain open to amendments to ensure that the bill remains consistent with existing legislation while ensuring that the government continues to move forward in implementing a secure process by which government departments are promptly informed and that these departments promptly respond when a Canadian passes away. I have said before that I would like MPs to hear public servants on how they would implement the bill and whether they feel that one year, as stipulated in the legislation, is a reasonable amount of time to implement the required changes or if more time is needed.

In closing, we have before us an opportunity to make a real difference for Canadians. It may not be glamorous, but it is truly important and practical. It is my sincere hope that all members of Parliament will support sending the bill to committee for further review and discussion of any necessary changes. I thank everyone for their participation in the debate of this issue; stakeholders, like the Funeral Service Association of Canada, for its information and intervention; and each of my constituents and Canadians across the country who contacted me with their questions and support of the bill.

• (1815)

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 recorded division stands deferred until Wednesday, October 8, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

Adjournment Proceedings

• (1820)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government's record is clear. We have taken decisive action on the environment, while protecting our environment. Everyone internationally has to do their fair share, and Canada is doing its part, as we emit only 2% of global greenhouse gas emissions.

Our government is implementing a sector-by-sector regulatory approach to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, which protects the environment and supports economic prosperity. We have already taken action on some of Canada's largest sources of emissions, such as the transportation sector and the coal-fired electricity sector. As a result of this action, Canada became the first major coal user to ban the construction of traditional coal-fired electricity generation units.

Canada already has one of the cleanest systems in the world, with more than three-quarters of electricity in Canada being generated from non-greenhouse gas emitting sources, such as hydro, nuclear, and renewables. Canada's stringent regulations are expected to cut emissions in the electricity sector by 46% by 2030, compared to levels in 2005.

[*Translation*]

Last week, we announced that our government is proceeding with three initiatives to reduce air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions from cars and trucks. This will help us further reduce greenhouse gases and ensure cleaner air for Canadians.

Thanks to these regulations, passenger vehicles and light trucks built in 2025 will produce about half the emissions of 2008 models, and greenhouse gas emissions from heavy trucks built in 2018 will be up to 23% lower.

At the climate summit in New York, we also announced that Canada is planning to regulate hydrofluorocarbons, or HFCs. HFCs are powerful greenhouse gases, and if they are not regulated, they will increase dramatically over the next 10 to 15 years.

Canada will harmonize its regulations with those recently proposed by the United States and will take preventive measures to reduce and restrict toxic HFC emissions before they get any higher.

[*English*]

Our government is working to ensure that we achieve results for Canadians and the environment.

Mr. Ted Hsu: Mr. Speaker, I just want to address one of the points that my hon. colleague made, which is a common argument that one hears: that Canada's emissions are only 2% of the world's emissions, so it is not that critical that Canada deal with its emissions.

On this anniversary of the beginning of the First World War, Canadians should be reminded that Canada only contributed about 2% of the combatants to the allied effort in the First World War, and that was not insignificant.

This summer, I gave a medallion to a Canadian D-Day veteran. We cannot tell that veteran that because he was only one person landing on the beach on D-Day that his effort was insignificant.

It is shameful when the government uses that argument, when it says that Canada's emissions are only 2% of the world's emissions. If Canada wants to be a leader—and I believe that Canada has a duty to be a leader in this world—we cannot make that argument.

The government has no sense of the importance of climate change, and it deserves to be kicked out of office next year.

• (1825)

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, what is shameful is the Liberal record on the environment. Canadians need to be reminded.

Let us look at the Liberal record. The Liberals signed on to the Kyoto deal with no plan to reduce greenhouse gases. As a matter of fact, they did worse than nothing. Greenhouse gases went up 130 megatonnes under their watch. As a matter of fact, their approach to decreasing greenhouse gases was, I think, as their leader said, that it just happens by itself. It is like budgets balancing themselves, I guess.

Our sector-by-sector regulatory approach is working. It is getting results. As a result of collective actions by governments, consumers, and businesses, Canada's 2020 greenhouse gas emissions are projected to be 128 megatonnes lower, relative to the scenario that would have been under the Liberals with no action in 2005.

We recognize that more work is required, and upcoming federal policies, along with further provincial measures, will contribute additional emissions reductions.

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 6:26 p.m.)

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