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(HANSARD)

Wednesday, October 8, 2014

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, October 8, 2014

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

• (1405)

[English]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Scarborough—Agincourt.

[Members sang the national anthem]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we all know that the leader of the Liberal Party is known for his “oops” moments, but did members know that his Liberal Party critics are having them too?

The member for Wascana was forced to apologize for misleading the House by misquoting support from a Laval economics professor. Then the Liberal finance critic misquoted Jack Mintz, who said that the Liberal EI scheme encourages employers to fire an older worker to make room for a new worker.

While the Liberal Party scrambles to cover up for its leader, we are delivering action on Canada's economy.

This week we have even more good news. Last year's deficit was down to roughly \$5.2 billion, much better than previously forecast. This demonstrates that we are firmly on track to balance the budget.

Yesterday the IMF projected Canada to be one of the strongest growing economies over the years ahead. The Fraser Institute has just ranked Canada among the most economically free countries in the world.

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[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, October 3,

there was an awards ceremony for the 125th Ordre national du mérite agricole competition, which recognizes the excellence and dedication of farmers.

The regional event for the Lower St. Lawrence took place in Rivière-du-Loup. Many agricultural endeavours in Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup were honoured. Here are a few examples: Ferme Jeannicole, in Kamouraska, won the prestigious title of commander of the Ordre national du mérite agricole; Ferme Hoelet, in La Pocatière, came in second place nationally; Ferme Jean Labrie, in Kamouraska, came in second place regionally and third place nationally; and Ferme Flamande, in Saint-Hubert-de-Rivière-du-Loup, won the La Coop fédérée agri-environmental award.

Mr. Speaker, food security is necessary for members of society to be truly happy. We must recognize the excellence of our agricultural workers and producers just as we must ensure that each and every decision we make in the House helps our agricultural businesses thrive.

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[English]

MARRIAGE

Mr. Maurice Vellacott (Saskatoon—Wanuskewin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is a myth out there that the divorce rate is close to 50%.

Shaunti Feldhahn found some startling and encouraging things in the research for her new book, *The Good News About Marriage*.

The divorce rate for first marriages is actually around 30%. Christians have between a 30% and 50% lower divorce rate than the general population. Although these are American figures, we Canucks can likely shave a few points off of that.

If people were to realize these facts and that most marriages do make it, they would be less skittish about tying the knot. When troubles come, they can say that most people have challenges in a marriage, but most people get over them and get through those problems and they will too.

Statements by Members

As the Institute of Marriage and Family Canada pointed out in a recent study, married couples tend to live longer. They tend to be wealthier. They tend to have a much easier time getting out of poverty. Their kids do better in school, are less likely to take drugs and alcohol, and are more likely to delay sexual activity. Of course, they are also happier.

There is good news out there about marriage, and we need to spread the word. The vast majority of marriages happily thrive. Marriage is a still a wonderful thing.

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NANCY MACLEAN

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to pay tribute to Nancy MacLean, who passed away in Vancouver due to unexpected complications following surgery.

Nancy was born on P.E.I., grew up in North Wiltshire, and graduated from UPEI with a BA in English and psychology. She so loved to write. She worked in three fields: as writer and editor for the entertainment and family pages of the *Charlottetown Patriot*; in the Privy Council Office of Prime Minister Trudeau, leaving for the west coast due to the pull of the sea; and in community work with seniors on the west coast.

Quite young, she was struck down with severely crippling rheumatoid arthritis, forcing her to retire. No stranger to surgery, facing it at least seven times, and certainly no stranger to the pain and depressing impact of arthritis, she never complained. Instead, she showed her kind heart and humour. Everyone who knew her admired her courage. She showed that courage and bravery through her disability.

Nancy loved both P.E.I. and B.C., but her heart belonged to P.E.I. We offer our condolences to her brothers, sisters, nieces and nephews.

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OPERATION NORTHERN SPOTLIGHT

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in March, I raised the impact of Operation Northern Spotlight, a national anti-trafficking initiative carried out by police services across Canada to identify and rescue victims of sex trafficking from prostitution.

Today I am pleased to give the House an update that phase two of Operation Northern Spotlight was carried out last week. Members of 26 police services, including my hometown Winnipeg police force, met with individuals in prostitution. As a result of the coordinated investigations, nine people were charged with 33 offences, including child pornography, assault, human trafficking and living off the avails. Police were also able to ensure the safety of 18 people who had been working in the sex trade as a minor or against their will.

Today, I would like to thank the 167 officers and support staff involved in last week's operation, and the local NGOs which partnered with the police. They worked relentlessly to bring freedom to those trapped in prostitution and sex trafficking.

NEW WESTMINSTER—COQUITLAM COMMUNITY EVENTS

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, “Wait for me, Daddy”. These famous words of Warren “Whitey” Bernard were immortalized in a sculpture unveiled this past weekend in the royal city of New Westminster.

The bronze statue depicts the iconic photograph of Whitey reaching out for his father's hand, who was a soldier marching with the B.C. Regiment down Eighth Street headed off to fight in the Second World War.

The photograph captures a tender moment that reminds us of the pain of separation and the sacrifices made by those who serve.

As the community gathered for the unveiling of this special sculpture and commemorative stamp and coin, we also were reminded of the hundreds of Canadian soldiers who will be deployed for combat this month, prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice in service to our country.

I would also like to acknowledge Terri Evans of the Coquitlam Farmers Market. This weekend we celebrated her 18 years of service to the society, our community and the local food movement.

Volunteers like Terri contribute to building healthy, sustainable communities, and I thank her for her service.

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● (1410)

PROSTITUTION

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased that Bill C-36, the protection of communities and exploited persons act, passed third reading here in the House only two nights ago.

Our Conservative government has provided the necessary leadership to ensure that Canada has the laws and safeguards to fight prostitution and the many evils that come with it: the proliferation of sexually transmitted diseases, the degradation and exploitation of women and girls, the scourge of human trafficking, and the involvement of organized crime to name only a few. It would be naive to think that these serious harms would be eliminated if prostitution were to suddenly become legal.

It should also be stated clearly that prostitution harms marriage and the family, both of which are fundamental to a healthy and strong nation.

As the father of five children, four of whom are daughters, I am glad that the purchase of sex through prostitution will remain illegal, thanks to Bill C-36. I personally thank each parliamentarian who voted in favour of this important legislation.

*Statements by Members***RIDING OF FORT MCMURRAY—ATHABASCA**

Mr. David Yurdiga (Fort McMurray—Athabasca, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the constituents of Fort McMurray—Athabasca for granting me the privilege to be their voice in the House of Commons.

The Fort McMurray—Athabasca riding is large geographically. I had the distinct privilege of meeting many constituents this past summer while travelling throughout the riding. The one characteristic that unifies our region is our strong sense of community. We are not only blessed with a diverse economy, but also enriched with a healthy and growing multicultural community. As more immigrants become settled, our community has benefited from new cultural exchange and celebrations.

Our Conservative government believes in strong, vibrant communities. That is why our government has implemented the new building Canada plan that focuses on creating jobs, economic growth and long-term prosperity.

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SERVICE CANADA

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the EI program for parents of critically ill children is a very valuable one, but only if it is working and paying people during their time of need. Sadly, it did not for Amanda Oram.

Cole Oram was born prematurely. He and his mom spent the next six months in the neonatal intensive care unit. She had to go into debt because she could not get EI to pay what she was owed. She spent exhausting hours trying to get through to Service Canada, waiting on hold, getting misdirected, having to resubmit applications and having hospital documentation wrongly rejected.

Service Canada's unreachability and bungling caused Amanda to spend countless hours away from her newborn son.

A Mount Sinai Hospital study shows that the presence of parents of preemies improves weight gain, breastfeeding, and decreases infection.

Sadly, Cole died. Amanda does not want others to suffer the same nightmare. She will never get back those hours she lost with her son.

Service Canada is under-resourced and poorly managed. This government should be ashamed enough to act now to fix this.

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THANKSGIVING

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the holiday weekend fast approaches, I would like to highlight that Canadian food banks are encouraging all Canadians to consider those families who are a little less fortunate than theirs by buying a turkey and gifting a turkey.

I would like to give thanks this year that I live in a territory of generous people who are full of the volunteerism spirit and are always willing to step up and support a great community cause.

I challenge all Yukoners to do what I have already done and gift a turkey to the local food bank in Whitehorse so that everybody can enjoy a great Thanksgiving weekend this year.

To those Yukoners who are taking a break this Thanksgiving weekend by travelling on Yukon's airline, Air North, to Victoria to run the marathon, I would like to wish them all the best in their run.

To all Yukoners and all Canadians, from my family to theirs, I wish everybody a very happy Thanksgiving.

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●(1415)

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF THE GIRL CHILD

Ms. Mylène Freeman (Argenteuil—Papineau—Mirabel, NDP): Mr. Speaker, to mark the third International Day of the Girl Child, my New Democratic colleagues and I are joining this call for action.

Too often, girls and young women are deprived of their right to self-determination.

For girls to achieve self-actualization and live with dignity, they need education, they need food security, they need to live free of violence and they need to have their reproductive choices respected, but in Canada and around the world, we are still fighting for those rights.

We must keep working toward the independence of girls and women.

[English]

We need to enshrine reproductive rights in our laws. Every young woman deserves to choose when, how and with whom she becomes a mother.

We need to empower all women to seek economic, housing and food security.

We need to honour indigenous rights and correct the legacy of colonial violence that afflicts the lives of Metis, Inuit and first nations girls in Canada.

We need a coordinated national action plan to address violence against women.

We must work in solidarity with women and girls in every community to bring these rights and freedoms to indigenous girls, to low-income girls, to girls who face violence, to all girls.

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INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to inform the House that Canada's Minister of Agriculture is in Chicago today to meet with American and Mexican representatives to highlight the importance of free and open trade. This is a unique opportunity for all three NAFTA countries to promote the integrated nature of our agriculture and food industry.

Statements by Members

Since NAFTA came into force, North American agricultural trade has quadrupled to over \$1 billion a week. However, U.S. country of origin labelling continues to be a serious roadblock against Canadian cattle and hog exports.

Our government has challenged COOL at the WTO and the WTO has made it clear: COOL is a blatant trade discrimination. That is why the minister is sending a clear message to our friends in the U. S., that it is time to fall into line with its obligations to the global trading community.

We continue to stand with our farmers and ranchers, and we are prepared to seek authorization from the WTO to impose retaliatory tariffs on U.S. imports if COOL is not resolved.

Trade is what drives our economies and we must continue to work together to grow our agriculture industries and operate our markets under science-based rules that reduce barriers to trade.

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ERIK SPICER

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to an illustrious parliamentarian who passed away September 27.

Erik John Spicer was never elected to the House of Commons or called to the Senate, but for 34 years he served these two institutions with skill and devotion as the Parliamentary Librarian of Canada.

Erik loved the library, as a building of huge historic importance, as an institution fundamental to our democracy, as a service indispensable to Canadians. He served 8 prime ministers, 22 Speakers, thousands of MPs and millions of citizens.

Erik was a decorated veteran, a patron of the arts, a man active in his local community and devoted to his family.

Canada's longest continually serving parliamentary official, Erik was uniquely recognized on his retirement as Librarian Emeritus and an honorary officer of both Houses.

Our thoughts and prayers are with his loving wife of 61 years, Helen, and the entire Spicer family.

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NATIONAL HOCKEY LEAGUE

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with Thanksgiving just around the corner, Canadians from coast to coast have much to be thankful for: a strong Canadian economy; a government committed to lowering taxes; increasing trade with our global partners; and much more. Last but not least, is the fact that the NHL is back.

After a long summer of watching our professional baseball team tease Canadian sports fans with hopes of making the playoffs, the Canadian Football League playoffs are just around the corner.

As Canadian hockey fans, we are ready to eat, sleep and breathe hockey, as we embark on the emotional roller coaster of following our favourite teams through every puck drop, penalty shot, goal scored, overtime and shootouts.

For all those who are supporting our Canadian teams, the Montreal Canadiens, Toronto Maple Leafs, Vancouver Canucks, Ottawa Senators, Winnipeg Jets, Calgary Flames and Edmonton Oilers, here is hoping our teams have a great season.

Go Habs.

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IRAQ

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the word flip-flop gets overused sometimes, but in the case of the Liberal Party and Iraq, we have seen so many flip-flops, five of them actually, we have had to coin a new word, the "fifth-flop".

On September 9, the Liberals' foreign affairs critic announced full support for the special forces mission. Two days later, the Liberal leader said that he would not rule out air strikes. The next week he declared that the Liberals would not support combat. However, later the same day he said that he might support combat if the Prime Minister answered questions.

By October 6, the critic was saying that the Liberals were open to a military mission "of a non-combat nature". Then yesterday he said that the Liberals would support the combat mission after the mission passed the House.

Meanwhile, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration is making up stories about weapons of mass destruction, the Minister of Foreign Affairs is unable to give details about the mission and the Prime Minister cannot even give a straight answer about how many soldiers are on the ground.

Are members confused? So are Canadians, and Canadians deserve better.

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● (1420)

UKRAINE

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is steadfast in its support for Ukraine, as it works towards a better and freer future.

Today, while in Ukraine, Ambassador Andrew Bennett announced additional support to foster the development of a political culture in Ukraine that would facilitate pluralism and religious freedom. Specifically, we are partnering with the OSCE to promote religious freedom, interfaith dialogue and prevent hate crimes in Ukraine. Moreover, we will be partnering with the Catholic Near East Welfare Association to promote interfaith and intercultural understanding among the different communities in Ukraine.

Pluralism and religious tolerance are essential principles for a thriving democratic society. Canada will always stand with the people of Ukraine, as it strengthens its institutions and reinforces the foundations of democracy, human rights and religious tolerance.

Slava Ukraini.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thousands of people have died from Ebola and many more have been exposed. The threat is increasing exponentially.

Will the Prime Minister hear the plea from U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry for countries to urgently increase their contribution? How will the Conservative government step up Canada's efforts to help those suffering from this Ebola outbreak and to stop its spread?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as members know, the Minister of International Development announced only recently increased assistance in this regard. Canada has two mobile units now present there. We have been moving materiel to help support the battle against Ebola. We have made resources, both financial and otherwise, available to the World Health Organization and other organizations that are operating on the ground.

We will continue to work with the international community on fighting what is a pandemic of some considerable concern.

[Translation]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the Prime Minister for his answer, but the most important thing is that there is an Ebola vaccine developed here in Canada. The Prime Minister has the power and the duty to make this vaccine available to the human beings who need it.

Will the Prime Minister take action, save lives and make sure that this vaccine is delivered to the people who need it?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there is a vaccine, and the government has made it available to the World Health Organization. It is up to that organization to decide how to use it. The vaccine is available.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is available, but it has not been delivered. The real question is, why has it not been delivered?

[English]

In 2010, the Conservative government gave the intellectual property rights for the Ebola vaccine to a private company. That is the only reason this vaccine is being held up. The Prime Minister knows that as well as we do.

What has the Prime Minister done? What has he done to help break this log jam and get this vaccine to the people who desperately need it?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have asked and confirmed that there is no intellectual property matter involved in the non-delivery of this vaccine. The vaccine is available to the World Health Organization. The World Health Organization at this point, for its own reasons, has decided not to deploy it. However, it is not due to that reason, and it is available to the WHO.

Oral Questions

• (1425)

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last year the Prime Minister claimed that the situation in Syria was so serious that it warranted a regime change at all costs.

Now the Prime Minister would gladly bomb Bashar al-Assad's enemies, but only if the dictator asks him to do so.

Why is the Prime Minister willing to compromise our soldiers and Canada's honour to help such a bloodthirsty dictator?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government has no intention of engaging in a war against Syria, Iraq or any other country in that region. We are engaging in a military mission against the Islamic State, and we believe it is important that that terrorist organization not have any safe haven in the region.

[English]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this weekend, the Minister of Foreign Affairs said that he could not discuss where Canadian aircraft would be based, as it was an operational detail. The United States openly tells its citizens where its planes are based. It is being reported here in Canada that our planes will be based in Kuwait.

Why can the Prime Minister not give Canadians a straight answer to such a clear question? Is the location of our aircraft top secret or can the Prime Minister simply confirm that they will be based in Kuwait?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can confirm to the House that the CF-18s will be deployed from 4 Wing Cold Lake, the Polaris will be deployed from 8 Wing Trenton and the Auroras will be deployed from 14 Wing Greenwood.

I know that the military is continuing to work on the deployment plan, and I am not in a position at this point to confirm where that deployment will be.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, many of the refugees from Kobane who entered southern Turkey had already fled their homes in other parts of Syria. In their rush to escape this time, many left with only the clothes on their back. They will soon be facing a cold winter. The humanitarian effort in the region is underfunded.

Does the government intend to offer more than the \$10 million in new aid recently announced?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government, as the Minister of International Development said yesterday, has been one of the leading donors to the humanitarian crisis in this region, and we will continue to be so.

However, let us be very clear. There can be no solution to the refugee crisis if we simply let ISIL go on and create millions more refugees in this region. That is part of the reason why this mission is so necessary.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, millions of Syrian refugees are now in Turkey, and winter is just around the corner.

Canada could help by meeting its objectives regarding the number of refugees we welcome here.

Will the government provide additional funding to deal with this looming crisis, and will it meet and even increase its own targets?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the Minister of International Development has explained from the beginning, the Government of Canada is one of the leading donors to the humanitarian crisis in this region. We will continue to do our part.

The Islamic State terrorist organization is creating millions of refugees, and we will not be able to stop it without military action.

[English]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last year Canada proposed an initial Syrian refugee intake target of 1,300, but only 200 are reported to have arrived on Canadian soil so far.

When will last year's target be met, and more importantly, when will that target be increased?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Once again, Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has addressed that particular question on a number of occasions.

I look at the numbers that the leader of the Liberal Party is throwing around. We have an organization in the region destabilizing an entire region and threatening to turn yet millions more people into refugees. There is no solution involved in simply a refugee response. If we want to stop ISIL, we have to do more than a refugee and humanitarian response, which we are doing. We also have to take a military response. That is what the international community and Canada are doing.

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● (1430)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday the Minister of Foreign Affairs said, "We are going to war with ISIL".

I have a question for the government. What is its vision of victory? What are its criteria for victory and does it still believe that it can win this war in six months?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been very clear that our mission is to degrade the capability of ISIL to commit the terrorist acts that it has been doing. This is part of our greater effort of humanitarian assistance. We have been providing surveillance on the ground. We are going to be deploying our planes.

This is a mission that should have had the support of everybody last night. I am very disappointed in that.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): It is answers like that, Mr. Speaker, that have Canadians worried about mission creep.

Last night, the Conservatives voted against the NDP's alternative plan, which would have kept Canada out of the war in Syria. Nearly all of our allies have put into place clear caveats that will not allow them to go into Syria.

Can the government explain why it has opened the door to Canadian combat in Syria?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been very clear about this mission. We have indicated that it is in Iraq and it is against ISIL. We will be deploying Canadian aircraft from the RCAF, the Polaris, the Auroras and the CF-18s. I am confident that they will get the job done. They will do the right thing and degrade this terrorist organization.

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INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we learned this morning in the *Toronto Star* that a report from the OECD says that in 2013 Canada was among the countries that reduced its foreign aid budget the most. During that same period, the international community globally increased its development assistance budget. In New York, the Prime Minister acknowledged that poverty and underdevelopment can foster conflict.

Does the minister agree? Why not invest more?

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we want to assist the most vulnerable people around the world and help to lift them out of poverty. Our government has a global reputation for paying what we pledge. Canada has been commended for delivering on its commitments to transparent and accountable development and for doing exactly what we say we are going to do. We will continue to ensure that all Canadians can take pride in our global leadership in development assistance.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the OECD report is clear: Canada is giving less and less development assistance, while the entire international community is giving more and more. In New York, the Prime Minister acknowledged that underdevelopment could create a breeding ground for conflict.

Does the minister agree that now is not the time for cuts, but for additional investments?

[English]

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said earlier, our commitment is to helping people, globally, be lifted out of poverty and to see a better life in the future.

Canada met all of its commitments for our global development . We want to ensure that those dollars are well spent. We want to know that Canadians are proud of the work we are doing, and we will continue to do that.

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[Translation]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this morning, the coroner's office released a report on the Lac-Mégantic tragedy. It recommends that no train carrying dangerous goods be left on a main line unsupervised. How is that even still possible, especially after the events at Lac-Mégantic?

When will the minister change the regulations and implement these recommendations?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with the release of the report we are reminded that 47 people lost their lives in this tragic incident. Of course, our thoughts and prayers will continue to be with the victims, their families and those who supported them.

That being said, we have taken great strides, this year, to ensure that we have responded to every single recommendation of the Transportation Safety Board. We will take into consideration, as well, what is put out in the Quebec coroner's report, and together, we will ensure that safety in rail is primarily and predominantly at the top of our agenda and will continue to do so.

• (1435)

[Translation]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately the news in the past few days reminds us that immediate action needs to be taken. Just yesterday, a CN freight train carrying dangerous goods derailed in Saskatchewan. Local residents had to evacuate to avoid breathing in the fumes. The TSB has already come down hard on the government for its lax attitude and lack of oversight.

What is the minister doing to ensure that the rail companies are obeying the law?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the premise that we have not done anything, let me just remind the House that we have invested \$60 million to support response and recovery efforts and \$95 million for decontamination remediation in Lac-Mégantic. We have removed the least crash-resistant DOT-111 tank cars from service. We require these tank cars be phased out within three years, well before the United States made the same moves. We require ERAPs for everything. We made sure that we brought a task force together with municipalities and first responders. Railway companies are required to reduce the speed of trains. I have a list that continues on.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, “avoidable” was how the Lac-Mégantic coroner described the 47 deaths. Still, the minister has failed to implement

Oral Questions

recommendations from the Transportation Safety Board to fix lax oversight of rail safety in her department.

Yesterday's fiery derailment in Saskatchewan, once again, raised concerns about the risks posed by hazardous rail shipments. Still, in the House, the minister says accidents like this happen.

What more will it take for the minister to simply and finally implement the TSB's recommendations?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have worked diligently on this matter with the municipalities, with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, with railway companies, with teamsters, with everybody involved in ensuring rail safety moves forward.

I can say one thing, though. It is erroneous to assume that this accident was not caused by one person who did not set enough handbrakes. Indeed, that individual and a number of others have been charged criminally in a court of law, as a result of negligence, which will go through its process.

The reality is that we have worked very closely on the matter. We have implemented many different actions to ensure that rail—

The Speaker: Order, please.

The hon. member for Parkdale—High Park.

* * *

TRANSPORT

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is government negligence that people are most concerned about.

Conservatives have also been failing Canadians when it comes to vehicle safety. The number of confirmed deaths due to faulty GM ignition switches has climbed to 24 but there are many more alleged to be linked to the defect. In spite of this, the Conservatives refuse to bring GM and departmental officials to committee to answer questions.

Canadians deserve answers. Can the minister at least tell us, so far, how much has GM been fined here in Canada?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under the law in Canada there is an obligation on GM to ensure that it informs Transport Canada of any defects. It did so in February of this year. We have not seen any evidence, after requesting more information, of its having any information regarding this defect in Canada prior to that time. As such, there have not been any charges issued under the Motor Vehicle Safety Regulations.

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MANUFACTURING INDUSTRY

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we have to love that voluntary compliance.

Oral Questions

October is National Manufacturing Month. We would not know it from the minister's press release but Canada has lost 415,000 good manufacturing jobs under the Conservative government. The Conservatives still have no plan to boost investment and innovation and they have cut support for R and D.

Manufacturing creates high-wage, high-quality jobs. When will the Conservatives start defending the interests of the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who work in the manufacturing sector?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a simple fact that Canada's manufacturing sales have bounced back and are actually up 25%.

As well, our government's initiatives include, for example, the automotive innovation fund. There was an announcement just last week, for example, at Ford in Oakville. It is creating 1,000 jobs on top of the 1,200 jobs that are currently in Oakville.

Add to that the fact that I was in Halifax this weekend at the Irving shipyard where there is the largest shipbuilding facility in all of North America, creating ships for Canada, for Canadians, for the future. It is a \$33 billion investment in Canada's manufacturing sector. We are delivering from coast to coast.

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• (1440)

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, people in Saskatchewan are cleaning up the mess from yesterday's train derailment. There were no injuries, thankfully, but it was dangerous. Twenty-six cars crashed. Dangerous goods spilled. There was a fire and pollution, and 50 people were evacuated. The province, municipalities and private individuals incurred costs.

I have three questions. Will all those costs be fully and quickly reimbursed? Were local first responders informed of the contents of that train before they had to deal with the emergency? Were these the old DOT-111 cars?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the first question from the hon. member, CN is responsible for the cleanup and any costs associated with it, so that is a question he should take up with CN. However, we fully expect a polluter-pay principle in this country. In fact, it was this government, in the Speech from the Throne, that indicated even more clearly that we fully expect and anticipate that this will be the regime going forward.

With respect to first responders, I am informed by officials on the ground that, yes indeed, there was collaboration between first responders and the appropriate officials in order to determine what was happening at the time.

With respect to the matter of the cars that were in use, the member should ask CN that question.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we do not yet know the cause of the Saskatchewan train wreck, but apparently operator error is being ruled out. Nevertheless, there is clearly an ongoing argument between Transport Canada and the railway companies about the issue of operator fatigue. Some reports suggest

that as many as three-quarters of freight operators may actually have fallen asleep at the controls.

The issue is acknowledged. It has been under investigation since 2009. Air crews and truck drivers are regulated against fatigue. Will the government implement the necessary safety regulations for train crews before Christmas?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would just caution the hon. member on talking about the causation before the Transportation Safety Board has weighed in on the cause of the accident. We do wait for it to do its work.

With respect to fatigue management plans, Transport Canada does indeed have the requirement that railway companies submit fatigue management plans. As well we do have rules for railway operating employees developed under the Railway Safety Act. We do have rules in place. We expect the companies to respect them. We want to have their plans and we will ensure that we enforce appropriately.

* * *

HEALTH

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, while we all understand that the nature of contagion of Ebola is low outside of endemic areas, Canadians are understandably anxious about reported cases outside West Africa, such as in Texas and Spain.

Can the Minister of Health tell us exactly what is Canada's level of preparedness for containment of possible cases of Ebola, including access to vaccines and treatment here in Canada?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada's preparedness is high. The Chief Public Health Officer is almost daily on calls with his provincial counterparts. I have spoken to all of my health counterparts as well on this issue. We have a very good public health system in Canada, whether it be for prevention, awareness, or treatment.

I have had the opportunity to speak with Canada's Chief Public Health Officer this morning on the matter of managing risks to the border. Of course, Canadians should know that international border crossings in Canada are monitoring 24-7, and travellers from the affected West African countries are identified, and they are asked about their health. Our government will be taking the additional step of doing targeted temperature screenings. We will do whatever is necessary to protect Canadians.

* * *

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of the Environment's definition yesterday of "leadership" includes not implementing promises, not meeting targets, and not answering questions.

The environment commissioner says that there is no climate change plan. The Conservatives are not going to meet their Copenhagen targets, and their sector-by-sector approach is not working.

The Conservatives have had eight years. When are we going to see emissions regulations in the oil and gas sector?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this is a continental issue, and we need a North American-wide solution.

Our government will continue to work with the United States on reducing greenhouse gas emissions for the oil and gas sector. We feel it is best to align with the United States as we have done in the transportation sector, as an example.

We will continue to protect the environment and reduce greenhouse gas emissions in a way that maintains job creation and economic growth.

•(1445)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, according to the environment commissioner, the new environmental assessment process is full of holes.

As a result of the Conservatives' legislative tricks, 80% of oil sands extraction projects now do not have to undergo environmental assessments.

Why are the Conservatives more concerned about the interests of oil companies than the interests of Canadians?

[*English*]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to read a quote that has come in from the president of the Canadian Renewable Fuels Association, who told our department that he was very disappointed with the commissioner's report, because it omitted major information. The president said that the renewable fuel regulations introduced by this Conservative government have removed the equivalent of a million cars and trucks from our roads and that they did so while promoting \$3.5 billion in economic growth.

This quote came from Scott Thurlow, the president of the Canadian Renewable Fuels Association, who is quite disappointed with the commissioner for omitting that big detail in her report.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Lapointe (Montmagny—L'Islet—Kamouraska—Rivière-du-Loup, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the commissioner's opinion is no small matter.

Next Saturday, a public demonstration will be held in Cacouna. Hundreds of people who are concerned about the future of the St. Lawrence will participate in it. Would people be protesting if environmental assessments were credible and were not rigged in advance in favour of the oil companies?

Oral Questions

As a result of the consistent incompetence of the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, the oil port in Cacouna is a complete fiasco.

Will the minister finally listen to Canadians and ask real experts to provide real scientific opinions on this issue? This has been an absolute farce for months.

[*English*]

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have said that projects will only move forward if they are safe for Canadians and safe for the environment.

TransCanada has not even submitted the construction of a marine terminal at Cacouna for review, so how can we turn down something that has not been applied for?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as early as May 2014, three independent scientists asked that all activity planned in the Cacouna area be cancelled because of the serious risk to the beluga whale population.

Hundreds of residents, the Saguenay-St. Lawrence Marine Park coordinating committee, the Société pour les mammifères marins and many municipalities also shared their serious concerns, but the minister did not budge.

Does the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans think it is right that residents of the Lower St. Lawrence are being forced to go to court in order for their opinions about the oil port in Cacouna to be heard?

[*English*]

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, at this stage, the only work that is being conducted at Cacouna is exploratory work, and this work has been carefully reviewed by scientists and authorized by scientists, contingent on the very strictest conditions. DFO has scientists specifically devoted to marine mammals, including St. Lawrence belugas, and as I said, projects will only move forward if they are safe for Canadians and safe for the environment.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Rodney Weston (Saint John, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is focused on what matters most to Canadians: jobs and economic growth. Over 1.1 million net new jobs have been added since the recession, one of the strongest job creation records in the G7. On top of that, our low-tax plan is making Canada a more attractive place to invest. In fact, Bloomberg has named Canada the second most attractive country in which to do business.

Could the Minister of State for Finance please update the House with the latest good news on the economy?

Hon. Kevin Sorenson (Minister of State (Finance), CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada is on track for a balanced budget. Last year's deficit was roughly \$5.2 billion, much better than previously forecast. It is great news for Canadians. Yesterday the IMF projected Canada to be one of the strongest growing economies in the years ahead. Today the Fraser Institute ranked Canada among the most economically free countries in the world.

Oral Questions

Canadians know they are better off with this Conservative government.

* * *

• (1450)

[Translation]

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the group Evidence for Democracy revealed today the extent to which federal scientists are isolated. The organization gave 15 departments a failing grade when it comes to protecting federal scientists from political interference.

The Conservatives have used internal media directives to muzzle our scientists and ensure that their disturbing opinions remain hidden away.

When will the Conservatives stop their war on our scientists?

[English]

Hon. Ed Holder (Minister of State (Science and Technology), CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is just not the case. My hon. colleague knows well that this government has made record investments in science, technology, and innovation. She also knows that Canada is ranked number one in the G7 for our support for scientific research and development in our colleges, universities, and research institutes. Ministers are the primary spokespersons for government departments, yet scientists have been and are readily available to share their research with Canadians.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister is just cherry-picking stats, and what he really has to do is back off and stop muzzling our scientists. Let us be clear. The government is so obsessed with controlling the message it spent \$20 million monitoring the media at the same time it was muzzling scientists. Thanks to the independent assessment, by E4D, of the government's own policies, we can see the government's failure on transparency in black and white.

Government scientists in the U.S. are more free to talk publicly about their work and are better protected from political interference. Why should Canadian scientists not be as free to talk about their work as American scientists?

Hon. Ed Holder (Minister of State (Science and Technology), CPC): Mr. Speaker, if we want to talk facts, let us talk a few things here. Canadian federal departments and agencies produce over 4,000 science publications every year. Fact. Environment Canada fielded nearly 2,500 media enquiries and published about 700 peer-reviewed articles this past year. Fisheries and Oceans Canada fielded 1,600 media enquiries and published 500 peer-reviewed articles last year. When it comes to science and technology, on this side of the House, we are interested in the facts.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the replacement program for the navy's resupply vessels is so far behind that the Conservatives are now considering using private ships to resupply the navy while relying more on the United States. Despite promising replacements in 2006, the Conservatives cancelled the

program two years later. We are now years behind. Is this the future for the Canadian navy: lend or lease?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not the case. The NDP usually gets it wrong on anything to do with Canada's military. That being said, there is a vigorous program on both coasts: on the west coast and on the east coast. With respect to resupplying the Royal Canadian Navy, we will get the job done.

[Translation]

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the resupply ships fiasco continues.

First, the Liberals announced that they were going to buy new ships in 2004, but the project was aborted. The Conservatives did the same thing in 2006, but did not follow through. Now they are promising new ships by 2020, and until then, they are thinking of using a commercial vessel. Is that what is in store for the Royal Canadian Navy? Will it be using commercial vessels or borrowing ships from the U.S. Navy? Honestly.

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, anything from the private sector would be offending to the NDP.

That being said, nobody has had a better record of supplying, refurbishing, and modernizing the Royal Canadian Navy, and that would include the Halifax-class frigate modernization program, the Globemaster strategic airlift, and the Arctic offshore patrol ships.

We will continue to work. We will supply the Royal Canadian Navy with what it needs. That is what we are committed to.

* * *

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to date the government has failed in its feeble attempts to reach its own greenhouse gas reduction targets. The cause of this failure: federal inaction, and by that I mean the abysmal lack of leadership on the part of this Conservative government, which has not even bothered to meet with representatives of the oil sector since March 2013 to discuss regulations for this sector.

When will the government take action and finally take the threat of climate change seriously?

• (1455)

[English]

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government record is very clear. We have taken decisive action in a responsible way to protect our environment and support the economy.

Thanks to our leadership and the efforts of different levels of government, businesses, and consumers, Canada's total greenhouse gas emissions in 2020 are projected to be 130 megatonnes lower than what they would have been under the Liberals.

We will continue to move forward with regulatory measures that will help reduce greenhouse gas emissions while creating jobs.

Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.): Still glued to the talking points, Mr. Speaker. Today and yesterday, the minister said the government's record is clear and we have had decisive action—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. member for Scarborough—Guildwood has the floor.

Hon. John McKay: There seems to be some enthusiasm for the question, Mr. Speaker.

The environment commissioner, however, says that federal departments have made unsatisfactory progress in the areas examined. Time lines have not been met. Departments are not able to assess whether the measures in place meet the emissions records expected.

Is this the record the minister is bragging about that is clear and decisive? That would be talking point number four.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of the Environment now has the floor.

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq: Mr. Speaker, I would like to read for the record a quote from the Canadian Renewable Fuels Association, which told our department, upon the release of the report of the environment commissioner, that it was quite disappointed in the environment commissioner's report, because it omitted information. It said that the renewable fuel regulations introduced by this Conservative government have removed the equivalent of a million cars and trucks from our roads and that they did so while promoting \$3.5 billion of economic growth.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, after the Conservatives savaged EI in Atlantic Canada, it appears that the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans perhaps got worried about her seat, because the Conservatives decided they would split P.E.I. in two, effectively dividing islander against

Oral Questions

islander. The government itself projects that this move would cost the average recipient in Charlottetown \$2,560 in lost benefits, and that is if they qualify at all.

My question to the government is: Instead of ramming through this senseless move, why would the Conservatives not just fix EI so that all islanders will benefit?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me be clear that this change is all about fairness. Maybe the member can tell his constituents and Nova Scotians how many regions there are in Nova Scotia.

* * *

[Translation]

HOUSING

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Conservative ministers from Quebec have done absolutely nothing for pyrrhotite victims. They would rather send the issue back to the Quebec courts.

The federal government is responsible for concrete aggregate standards. However, it failed to prevent this tragedy. People in the Mauricie region are calling for a public inquiry to look into this tragedy.

Will the minister listen and do what it takes to ensure that this kind of crisis never happens again?

Hon. Ed Holder (Minister of State (Science and Technology), CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, the pyrrhotite issue falls under provincial jurisdiction.

The Government of Quebec has launched a very important program to provide financial assistance to owners who are dealing with pyrrhotite damage.

I urge people affected by this issue to contact the Société d'habitation du Québec.

* * *

• (1500)

[English]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a small town in Colorado has won a battle with the U.S. federal government over a bridge that contained Canadian steel. A protectionist policy known as "Buy America" would have forced the town to dismantle the bridge and to take the Canadian-made steel out in order to be eligible for a grant.

Could the Minister of International Trade please update the House on the government's position regarding Buy America?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for that excellent question. We are pleased to see that this issue has been resolved. The situation in Colorado highlights how highly integrated the Canadian and U.S. economies are and how difficult it is to segregate North American supply chains.

Oral Questions

Protectionism is bad policy and is bad for businesses on both sides of our borders. We will continue to oppose Buy America measures as we engage with our American trading partners to improve the free flow of goods, services, and people between our two great countries.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, just weeks after Ottawa police lost one of their own, the RCMP announced the death of Corporal Ron Francis. Sadly, the list of soldiers and first responders suffering with PTSD grows, yet little is being done to help. Much is said about supporting our troops, but for those with PTSD, actions speak louder than words, and silence is all they see from those with the power to prompt change.

Will the government stand with first responders, outlaw harassment, and create a PTSD strategy that will really work before we lose any more of our heroes?

Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for that question.

First and foremost, our prayers and our thoughts continue to go out to the family of the RCMP officer, as well as to fellow officers within the RCMP. It was certainly a tragedy.

As the member knows, the RCMP continues to offer services to treat members with operational stress injuries, including PTSD. We rely on those services provided to help these individuals cope with their injuries.

I just also want to say in addition that RCMP officers also benefit from OSI clinics through Veterans Affairs Canada.

* * *

[*Translation*]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when the Minister of Immigration transferred case processing to Mississauga, he promised that there would be no additional delays. However, we are hearing a different story from our constituents.

Whether it is for a work permit or family reunification, some of my constituents have been waiting more than 13 months for a response. That is absolutely unacceptable.

Does the minister fully realize that these delays, which are getting longer and longer all the time, are having a major impact on the lives of those involved?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is not true.

On the contrary, our office in Mississauga has made very significant progress on citizenship cases. The staff there have processed a record number of cases this year, and the same is true of family cases and economic immigration cases.

We have made huge progress in reducing the backlog that we inherited from the Liberal Party in 2006.

[*English*]

SPORT

Mr. Kyle Seeback (Brampton West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, every day Canada gets closer to hosting the Pan Am and Parapan American Games. We will welcome 10,000 athletes, coaches, volunteers, and, of course, their families and friends from 41 participating countries.

I am proud to say that our government is fully committed to these games, with funding that will provide sports facilities across Ontario and legacy initiatives that will leave a lasting impact for both high-performance athletes and for families.

Could the Minister of State for Sport please provide an update on how Canadians can get involved in these games?

Hon. Bal Gosal (Minister of State (Sport), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Brampton West for the question. He is an Olympian himself.

We are proud to be hosting the largest multi-sport games Canada has ever hosted next summer. The venues, including buildings such as the athletes' complex in North Shore, the Velodrome in Milton, and an aquatic facility in Scarborough, will leave a lasting legacy.

I am also pleased that our government is supporting a torch relay, which I first announced alongside our honorary torchbearer, Commander Chris Hadfield. Pan Am will need 3,000 volunteer torchbearers to carry the flame through 130 communities across Ontario and five major cities across Canada that have hosted major games.

I know that this will be an opportunity to showcase everything that Canada has to offer. I encourage everyone—

* * *

● (1505)

[*Translation*]

CANADA POST

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Saint-Lambert's city council unanimously opposed the elimination of door-to-door mail delivery, which is slated for 2015 on Montreal's south shore. Canada Post's decision will deny seniors in my riding, such as Jocelyne Langis of Longueuil, of an essential service.

Not everyone can pay a private company to deliver mail to their home.

How can the government claim to be listening to the people when it is ignoring the unanimous call by elected officials on the south shore?

[*English*]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada Post currently only delivers to the doors of one-third of Canadian homes. It will be moving to phase that out over the next five years in order to ensure that it can remain self-sufficient, as it is supposed to do under its constituting statutes.

That said, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities has had this discussion. It has duly considered a recommendation and a resolution asking the government to overturn Canada Post's decision, and it soundly defeated this resolution en masse.

Canada Post will continue to implement its five-point plan.

* * *

[Translation]

MARINE TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, next Sunday, another megaship will transport several tonnes of oil from the oil sands down the St. Lawrence. In a unanimous resolution, the city of Sorel-Tracy called on the federal government to increase safety and inspection measures for these ships, to require that they be prepared for a spill and to draft a list of all of the liquids they are transporting on the river. In short, they are calling for anyone who uses the St. Lawrence to be socially, environmentally and financially responsible.

Will the minister finally take action and suspend the transportation of dangerous goods on the river until she can ensure that the process is safe and that there are emergency response measures in place?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada has a very robust system for dealing with the movement of tankers, whatever their product may be, internally. In fact, we have already had an expert panel review these for us. It has come up with recommendations that we are looking at implementing now as well. The system is safe.

One other thing that I would like to mention is that we have been transporting cargoes of oil on the Atlantic coast for 100 years now. It has always been done very safely, and people in that area are very capable and qualified and competent to deal with anything that may happen.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS

Mr. Ryan Leef (Yukon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian delegation to the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association respecting its participation in the meeting of the Standing Committee of Parliamentarians of the Arctic Region, held in Copenhagen, Denmark, June 10 to 11, 2014.

* * *

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 22nd report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

Routine Proceedings

The committee advises that pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), the subcommittee on private members' business met to consider the items added to the order of precedence as a result of the replenishment of Tuesday, September 23, 2014, and recommended that the items listed therein, which it has determined should not be designated non-votable, be considered by the House.

● (1510)

The Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 91.1(2), the report is deemed adopted.

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP) moves that the second report from the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage, presented on Wednesday, February 5, 2014, be concurred in.

The Speaker: Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

The Speaker: The question is on the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

(Motion agreed to)

Mr. Joe Preston: Mr. Speaker, if the House gives its consent, I move that the 18th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, presented to the House early last week, be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

PETITIONS

AGRICULTURE

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions here. The first petition is with respect to the right to save seeds. It is from some residents of Vancouver Island, who are asking Parliament to recognize the rights of farmers to save, reuse, collect, exchange, and sell seeds and to enact legislation to that end.

HEALTH

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the next two petitions are in favour of Motion No. 501, a motion calling for a national strategy for innovation, effectiveness, and cost-effectiveness in sustainable health care. That motion will come up for debate in the new year.

Routine Proceedings

HUMANITARIAN AID IN GAZA

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by constituents and people in the Ottawa area who note that the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip is critical and that the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East has declared an emergency. The petitioners note that the U.S. has already contributed tens of millions of dollars, and they ask that Canada do the same. They are asking that the government make an immediate contribution to UNRWA for the emergency and to help rebuild Gaza.

FALUN GONG

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure and honour to submit a petition from the Falun Gong group in my riding. Falun Gong is a traditional Chinese spiritual discipline that consists of meditation, exercise, and moral teachings based on the principles of truthfulness, compassion, and tolerance.

ROUGE NATIONAL PARK

Mr. Dan Harris (Scarborough Southwest, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition from hundreds of local residents regarding the proposed Rouge national park. The petitioners respectfully ask the Government of Canada to protect the irreplaceable 100-square-kilometre public land assembly within a healthy and sustainable Rouge national park.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Mark Warawa (Langley, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to present a petition which highlights that this Saturday is International Day of the Girl.

The petition highlights that CBC revealed that ultrasounds are being used in Canada to tell the sex of an unborn child so that expecting parents can terminate the pregnancy if it is a girl. Ninety-two per cent of Canadians believe that sex-selective pregnancy termination should be made illegal.

The petitioners are calling upon all members of Parliament to condemn this practice of discrimination against girls.

DURHAM REGION FEDERAL LANDS

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to present a petition today with respect to the federal lands in Durham region.

The signatories to this petition point out that these lands encompass class one farmland and vital watersheds of the Oak Ridges Moraine.

The petitioners call upon the House to rescind all plans for an airport and non-agricultural uses on these federal lands in Durham region and to act instead to preserve the watersheds and the agricultural land of this irreplaceable natural resource for the long-term benefits of all Canadians.

• (1515)

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are 200 names of citizens from Kamloops, British Columbia on this petition.

The petitioners are calling for us to adopt legislation requiring all genetically modified products and ingredients to be labelled as GMOs, thereby allowing consumers to make informed choices about their lifestyles.

BISON

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present two petitions today.

In the first petition, the petitioners call on Parliament to recognize August 9 as national bison day. They do this because bison have played an important part in Canadian history and they still play an important role in Canadian agriculture.

SEX SELECTION

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as we approach the International Day of the Girl, the petitioners remind Parliament that 92% of Canadians support ending sex-selection pregnancy termination.

The petitioners call on Parliament to condemn discrimination against girls occurring through gender-selective pregnancy termination.

ROUGE NATIONAL PARK

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I stand today to submit petitions on behalf of people from all across the GTA on the creation of Rouge national park.

The current Rouge Park is home to the endangered mixed woodland and Carolinian forest, the northernmost point in North America, and the ancestral home of the Mississauga, Huron-Wendat, and Seneca first nations and their sacred burial and village sites.

The proposed legislation for the Rouge national urban park concept ignores the ecological integrity role of the existing Rouge Park and a true Canadian national park.

The petitioners respectfully ask the Government of Canada to protect the irreplaceable 100 square kilometres of public land assembly within a healthy and sustainable Rouge national park.

HUMAN RIGHTS

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

Similar to my friend from Winnipeg, there are hundreds of signatures on these petitions. The petitioners are residents primarily of the greater Toronto area.

The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to recognize the oppression of practitioners of Falun Gong and Falun Dafa in the People's Republic of China. They call on the government to press the Government of the People's Republic of China to respect human rights, particularly those of religious minorities.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from residents primarily of the Vancouver and Burnaby areas.

The petitioners note the threat to the waters of the Salish Sea and the surrounding areas from the Kinder Morgan proposal. They call on Parliament to create a permanent legislated ban on supertankers.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present to the House today.

In the first petition, the petitioners call on the government to intervene and stop the development of the Sarnia-Montreal Line 9 pipeline. They note that it goes through the most densely populated area of the country, being Toronto. They also note that the energy transport company Enbridge has a poor record when it comes to pipeline safety.

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition pertains to the issue of precarious work in the GTA.

Right now, about 50% of all workers in Toronto cannot find a stable full-time job. This petition supports my private member's bill to institute a national urban worker strategy.

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today.

The first petition is on behalf of 112 residents of Edmonton—St. Albert. The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to recognize the dire situation of Christians in Iraq and to speed the refugee process to help displaced Christians and give them safe passage into refugee status.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is signed by 1,671 residents of Edmonton—St. Albert.

The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to recognize the plight of Falun Gong and the Falun Dafa practitioners and the persecution they face in China. They call on the Government of Canada to press the Government of China to end their horrific persecution.

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present.

The first petition is asking the government not to close the veterans office in Windsor, which it has done. The petitioners especially note that Windsor was heavily recruited for soldiers, both men and women. They believe that the services should be restored in Windsor.

• (1520)

OJIBWAY PRAIRIE COMPLEX

Mr. Brian Masse (Windsor West, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is to protect the Ojibway Prairie Complex in the Great Lakes area. This land is one of the last forested areas next to

Routine Proceedings

the Great Lakes. The petitioners are calling for its protection and assurance that it will be part of a larger environmental park for the region.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from a number of citizens of London, Ontario.

They begin their petition by reminding us that Canada has long been known as a peacekeeping nation and that we take pride in the neutral stance that we have taken during international conflicts. However, the petitioners are concerned that the current government is increasingly favouring the Israeli side of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. They believe that this attitude poses a threat to our country's credibility in the international arena and affects how Canadians are perceived globally. They are concerned about this stance jeopardizing the safety, security and well-being of Canadian families travelling abroad or residing in these areas of conflict.

The petitioners ask all parliamentarians to voice concern about this one-sided approach that the current government has taken.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a petition from people in my riding who have ancestry and links to Hong Kong regarding the pro-democracy movement in Hong Kong. They believe that this pro-democracy movement is essential to restoring and enhancing basic human rights in Hong Kong.

The petitioners call upon the government to denounce the use of violence, evaluate China's human rights record, implement trade sanctions against China, and perhaps stop pipeline projects in Canada that benefit the Chinese government. They urge the government to make an official statement on the actions in Hong Kong.

[*Translation*]

CANADA POST

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour and my great privilege to present a petition about service cuts at Canada Post signed by several thousand people from Sherbrooke.

Many people condemn these service cuts. They want quality, accessible service from their federal government, and that includes home mail delivery.

It is an honour and a privilege to present this petition on behalf of the people of Sherbrooke.

* * *

[*English*]

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 Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

*Government Orders***MOTIONS FOR PAPERS**

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The Chair would like to take a moment to provide some information to the House regarding the management of private members' business.

[*Translation*]

As members know, after the order of precedence is replenished, the Chair reviews the new items so as to alert the House to bills which at first glance appear to impinge on the financial prerogative of the Crown. This allows members the opportunity to intervene in a timely fashion to present their views about the need for those bills to be accompanied by a royal recommendation.

[*English*]

Accordingly, following the September 23, 2014 replenishment of the order of precedence with 15 new items, I wish to inform the House that there is a bill that gives the Chair some concern as to the pending provisions it contemplates.

[*Translation*]

It is: Bill C-622, An Act to amend the National Defence Act (transparency and accountability), to enact the Intelligence and Security Committee of Parliament Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts, standing in the name of the member for Vancouver Quadra.

[*English*]

I would encourage hon. members who would like to make arguments regarding the need for a royal recommendation for this bill or any other bills now on the order of precedence to do so at an early opportunity.

● (1525)

[*Translation*]

I thank honourable members for their attention.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

ROUGE NATIONAL URBAN PARK ACT

The House resumed from October 2 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.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to stand in the House today to

participate in the debate on Bill C-40, an act respecting the Rouge national urban park.

While I stand in support of this bill at this stage of the legislative process, my remarks today are by no means free of criticism of the bill. In fact, this speech, as with all the speeches from the NDP caucus, is intended to send a clear message that significant amendments need to be made to the bill in order to garner support through to the end of the legislative process.

Of course, the criticism herein is intended to be constructive. It is a plea to the government to raise its sights, its ambitions, and to do three things: realize the great potential of this project; realize the dreams of a whole lot of hard-working citizens who always had before them a clear sense of the great potential of this project; and set a precedent for a new kind of Canadian park, a national urban park.

There is an existing Rouge Park. At 47 square kilometres, it is one of North America's largest and sits amidst about 20% of Canada's total population.

The park is rich in its diversity of nature and culture. It includes a rare Carolinian forest, numerous species at risk, internationally significant geological outcroppings from the interglacial age, and evidence of human history dating back 10,000 years, including some of Canada's oldest known aboriginal historic sites and villages.

For many years, these resources have been under the stewardship of the Rouge Park Alliance, an alliance of many groups, including dedicated citizen groups, but there is now before us the opportunity to move this park and add other resources to it under the stewardship of Parks Canada and its commitment to ecological integrity.

The proposed Rouge national urban park should provide protection and restoration of forests and wetland areas to soften the impacts of urban growth, improve the quality of water entering Lake Ontario, reduce the risks of climate change-related flooding, erosion, and property damage, and improve habitat for rare and endangered species. This is important.

We have built our cities and continue to build our cities with insufficient care and respect for the ecological integrity of the nature that runs through them and borders them, and more than that, with insufficient care and attention to the application of the notion of ecological integrity to how we build and grow cities themselves. There is a certain bitter irony in this.

As pointed out in a report by Ontario Nature and the Suzuki Foundation, entitled "Biodiversity in Ontario's Greenbelt":

Humans chose to settle in this part of Ontario in large part because of the rich diversity and fertility of the land. Millions now make their home in this region, as do a large number of our most enchanting species at risk....

Evidence of that once beautiful natural landscape remains in Toronto. A recent *Toronto Star* article put it this way:

The city of Toronto was built on the backs of its rivers. Nine rivers and creeks flow through its rich valleys and pour into Lake Ontario, making rivers as essential a part of Toronto's landscape as the CN Tower or Queen's Park.

Said Robert Fulford in his book *Accidental City*, "The ravines are to Toronto what canals are to Venice and hills are to San Francisco".

Government Orders

Some of those rivers were lost but have since been found. Groups such as the Toronto Green Community and the Toronto Field Naturalists actually provide Lost River Walks in the city. Some rivers, such as the Humber, the Don, and the Rouge, their various branches and tributaries, remain essential to what Toronto is and more important, remain essential to visions of what Toronto could actually be if we took care to restore and preserve their ecological integrity.

There are innumerable groups on the ground in our urban communities animated by a vision of preserving and restoring the natural and cultural heritage of these rivers, preserving and restoring that which brought people to settle there and live off that part of the land in the first place.

• (1530)

In my riding, for example, the Taylor Massey project was developed by a group of volunteers a decade ago for the purpose of increasing community awareness of this 16 kilometre watercourse and for the purpose of restoring the natural heritage of the creek's valley lands and to improve the water quality and aquatic habitats of this urban creek.

The Taylor Massey creek flows into the Don River. By 1969, the Don River was reportedly not much more than a city sewer. That prompted some to call it dead. Therefore, on November 16 of that year, 200 mourners paraded from the University of Toronto campus down to the banks of the Don River in a mock funeral procession complete with hearse.

If it was indeed dead, then it has risen from the dead, thanks to the efforts of countless citizens, but not yet fully recovered because much more effort is required. I am thankful for those people who commit their free time and energy to its revitalization and to realize, for their own projects, for their own communities, for the benefit of all of us, what we have now the opportunity to do for the Rouge River.

What we have in this legislation is a great opportunity. With respect to the Rouge, so many people have brought us to this point where this land can be brought under the stewardship of Parks Canada. As stated on its website:

Parks Canada's objective is to allow people to enjoy national parks as special places without damaging their integrity. In other words, ecological integrity is our endpoint for park management...

However, rather than bringing to the urban park the same commitment, indeed legislatively set out priority, to ecological integrity that is applied to its other parks, the legislation would shed that commitment and shake loose that priority. Bill C-40, in fact, would require only that the minister "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". This flies in the face of Parks Canada's own governing legislation and policies that specify the maintenance or restoration of ecological integrity through the protection of natural resources and natural processes and the fact that this should be the first priority of the minister when considering all aspects of the management of its parks.

What is more, this language affords, according to a recent legal review by Ecojustice, significantly less protection than Ontario's

Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act. In failing to do so, it would appear to be an obvious breach of the memorandum of agreement between Parks Canada and the Ontario government, which requires that the policies that govern the Rouge national urban park meet or exceed provincial policies.

This is how we end up in this position, with the Ontario government withholding the transfer of lands to Parks Canada until the federal government commits in effect, and really quite perversely, to live up to its own legislative priorities and commitments.

The bill needs to change so it is consistent with the Canada National Parks Act and lives up to commitments made to the Government of Ontario so we can get on with the great opportunity of creating a first and great national urban park along the Rouge River watershed.

Let me conclude by saying, with respect to the many people who are putting their minds and energy to this issue, that we have not really arrived at a clear understanding of what the ecological integrity of the urban actually looks like. However, I approach that issue with the same optimism and the same ambition as I do this legislation. The urban and the concept of ecological integrity ought not to stand in contradistinction. Indeed, in light of the incredible rate of urbanization globally, we have to make meaningful the notion of "urban ecological integrity". A first national urban park is the first good step along that path.

• (1535)

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have listened carefully to the member's critique of the bill.

I believe the bill, as it is currently drafted, would allow Parks Canada to implement a management plan for the park that would ensure a higher standard of ecological integrity for this new national urban park than is currently the case for parks in the Ontario provincial park system, parks like Algonquin and Killarney.

In the provincial statute, I note that the province is mandated to protect ecological integrity. Equally, the province is required to protect Ontario's natural and cultural heritage. Both are given equal weight in the provincial statutes.

The approach taken in the federal legislation is no different. The big difference is in the actual implementation of these laws. I believe Parks Canada will interpret these laws to a much higher standard than is the case in the Province of Ontario. That will please residents of this area, because the Rouge will exceed Algonquin and other types of provincial parks.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Speaker, with all due respect to the member's assurances, I take cold comfort in that.

One of the issues is that the management of the provincial parks is happening at a lower standard than the principles and priorities set out in this federal legislation. This bill explicitly stands in contradiction of the priorities as set out in the prevailing legislation for national parks.

Government Orders

What we are seeking and asking is that the bill be amended in order to retain the priority of ecological integrity for the management of the Rouge national urban park.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there are a number of ironies in the government's approach to environmental issues. One of them is that this river used to be protected by the Navigable Waters Protection Act, and that was removed by the government.

We have put forward private members' bills, and I believe the member has as well, to re-protect these waters.

Would the member like to comment on the apparent contradiction by the government?

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Speaker, I, too, have presented petitions with respect to the Don River, which borders against my riding in Toronto, Beaches—East York.

As I commented in my speech, many people over many long years have put in a lot of effort to ensure that the Don River has been revitalized and that it comes closer to the principle of ecological integrity, as it flows through the city.

This is the great opportunity we have with the Rouge park, that under the protection of an appropriately worded bill, that river, too, can be protected and live up to the principles and priority that exists under the National Parks Act of ecological integrity.

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his obvious commitment to the rivers and natural places across the GTA.

With regard to the question of ecological integrity, the general definition is that in our great and wild national parks ecological integrity is very often taken to allow nature to take its course, whether that is wildfires, floods or erosion, the natural changes that take place across these spaces.

In the parks plan for our oldest parks, Banff and Jasper, for example, there are provisions for interventions around townsites, around the townsites of Banff or Jasper, for example, with regard to fighting fires, floods, controlling river flows, town dumps and the use of infrastructure of these towns.

Parks Canada has made a commitment. Certainly the stewards of the Rouge Park Alliance over the years have been looking for one body like Parks Canada, pre-eminent in the world in terms of its stewardship—

• (1540)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. The hon. member for Beaches—East York.

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Quite simply, Mr. Speaker, the language of the bill does not require it to happen.

I appreciate the member's point that this is a qualitatively different park than the remote parks under the stewardship of Parks Canada. However, my point is, given, as per the UN's department of economic and social affairs, that all population growth on this planet will be urban for the next four decades, we need to find a way to make sense of applying the principle and priority of ecological integrity to our cities, how we build them and grow them. Having

Canada's first national urban park is a great way to start down that road.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Davenport.

The notion of ecological integrity is one that may be foreign to some of the members opposite. Certainly it is foreign to the way the government has approached many of the issues that have arisen over the course of its term in office in terms of protecting and enhancing the environment.

The member for Thornhill, who most recently asked a question, was at one point the minister of the environment when one of the worst pieces of legislation, as far as the environment is concerned, was introduced. That was the budget implementation bill of 2012, which in fact eliminated environmental protection through the environmental assessment act and replaced it with an act that basically does very little to protect the environment.

This same government then, in another budget implementation bill, removed the protection for Canada's water systems, the watercourses, for the rivers, the lakes, the streams that run all over our country. Some 250,000 of them used to be protected and now we are down to something like less than a hundred. Therefore, ecological integrity is not top of mind for the members opposite.

That said, we support and we will fight for the notion of creating an ecological preserve in the heart of an urban area, in particular in Toronto, where I live. It will hopefully set a precedent for the creation of other urban area ecological integrity preserves in many urban areas in Canada. As the member for Beaches—East York said, all of the population growth is going to happen in the cities in the next 40 years.

We need to get it right. We need to design our park systems to protect the integrity of the ecology. We need to design them to provide access to the burgeoning populations of these great metropolises, while not allowing that access to degrade the park. We need to be able to use these systems for the creation of parks to provide us with the necessary climate change adaptation that we are now going to be facing.

There are members opposite who used to talk about climate change adaptation. In fact, it was the member for Thornhill's favourite words over the course of his term in office. He said we were not going to protect against climate change; we were going to adapt to it. That seems to have fallen off because someone discovered it costs money to protect us against climate change, but we still need to do it.

One of the ways to do it is to design and protect the integrity of watercourses that flow through our urban areas. One of these watercourses is the Rouge River. The Rouge River gets its start in the headlands north of Toronto in the Oak Ridges Moraine and carries fresh water from a huge area of drainage to Lake Ontario, thus protecting that watercourse.

Government Orders

Protecting what flows into that water and protecting the lands around that water will also protect the integrity of Lake Ontario. Lake Ontario is the drinking water source for several million Canadians. Ultimately it flows down the St. Lawrence toward Montreal and becomes the drinking water source for many more Canadians. Therefore, protecting the integrity of that water system is something that we should be paying careful and close attention to. We cannot do it by removing protections, which is what the government has done in the past.

The Canadian Environmental Assessment Act now basically does not protect the environment at all. That was back in 2012, more than two years ago. Schedule 2 has yet to be published. We still do not know what an environmental assessment will do in terms of human health. A number of pieces of what is to be protected by the environmental assessment is still not defined because the government has still not published the regulations.

It is that kind of laissez-faire attitude that we on this side of the House wish to correct. One of the things we hope to do by giving Bill C-40 support is to bring these flaws to the attention of its drafters in the environmental committee over the course of the next few weeks and months, so that we can make the corrections that are necessary to make the bill much more robust and a better example of a precedent for other cities in the country.

● (1545)

With this bill we need to provide for a way to adopt the long-standing vision that has been around for many years for the Rouge Park. We need to strengthen and implement the existing environmental protection policy framework and that includes protecting the watercourse. The removal of the watercourse from the Navigable Waters Protection Act, some may wonder what difference that really makes in this day and age. Surprisingly, a meeting between the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority and Enbridge about Line 9, which flows across this park and across the Rouge River, advised the conservation authority that the removal of the watercourse from the Navigable Waters Protection Act meant that they no longer had to put shut-offs on an oil pipeline as it crossed the river. This is one of the consequences of removing the protection.

Was that a deliberate act on the part of the government? I hope not, but it is a consequence of that act and it is a consequence that we cannot sit idly by and let go on. Imagine if we create this wonderful park and Line 9 bursts over the river? What utter degradation. What utter devastation to the Rouge River would happen then.

In addition, the whole notion of will give consideration, which is part of what the bill is about, is one of the things that we have serious reservations about and the Province of Ontario has serious reservations about. That phrasing is in keeping with the government's general approach to the environment, which is "we will give it some thought but we are not going to be held to anything, we are not going to actually guarantee that we are going to do anything". That is one of the reasons the Province of Ontario has withdrawn its support at the moment for transferring its lands into this set of lands. It is afraid that the word "consideration" will mean that the park's ecology can be degraded in a manner that it would not have allowed.

I believe that the Province of Ontario may have it right. We do not always agree with the way the Province of Ontario behaves, but in

this case it may have it right. We need to correct the bill in order to make sure that the integrity of the park and the integrity of the entire system is protected and maintained.

In addition, there is an opportunity with something called Pickering lands, which are lands that are north of this park, that presents itself to the drafters of the bill and to the government to include a much bigger area in the protections that this park legislation is meant to provide. We should not bypass that opportunity to try to find a way to protect more of the Oak Ridges Moraine, to connect this park to the Oak Ridges Moraine, because right now the town of Stouffville has way too much development in it to connect it otherwise. Therefore, connecting it through the Pickering lands would be a good additional step.

Finally, I want to say something about what was referred to in part by the member for Beaches—East York and that is the notion of the potential for flooding, the potential for climate-change-wrought, weather-related devastation to parts of the city of Toronto. One of the things we discovered in my riding is that despite the actions of the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority, some devastating flooding took place in the July 8 storm in which more water fell than in Hurricane Hazel and it fell in shorter time. That flooding is a direct result of the massive changes to the weather systems that we are seeing and we are not prepared for it. The cities are not prepared for it.

The creation of this park could give the federal government, the provincial government and the city of Toronto the opportunity to study ways to prevent the kind of disaster that happened on July 8, 2013, and to find ways to make sure that water flow is managed in such a way that it does not affect human habitation around it. The alternative is to spend hundreds of billions of dollars in redirecting water through giant sewers and creating a whole new set of infrastructure that the city cannot afford to do. It would be turning to the federal government to afford to do that and the federal government has already said there are limits in how far it can go.

● (1550)

In closing, we do appreciate the effects of the bill, but we wish to see it go to committee so that it can be seriously amended in such a way as to give the land the protection it deserves.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Rouge national urban park would be unlike other national parks. It would include major highways, rail lines, homes, businesses and hydro corridors as well as farmland.

Ecosystems have integrity when their native components are intact, because ecosystems are constantly changing. Conservation strategies, which have ecological integrity as their primary goal, should maintain or resolve key ecological processes that reflect their natural condition, such as fire, flooding, death and disease outbreaks, among others. These aspects make the concept of ecological integrity inappropriate for the national urban park.

Ecological health is an approach that recognizes the park's increasingly urban surroundings. Parks Canada would manage the park in an adaptive way so that it stays healthy and strong while respecting that the park is located in an urban centre. This approach allows us to balance the pressure of an urban environment.

Government Orders

Does the member recognize that there is a need for legislation defining an urban national park, which is different from the legislation of a national park?

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, I do not disagree with the member opposite that this is a different kind of park, but I do disagree that we cannot strive to do more than just consider the ecological integrity of the park. I believe that we need to preserve the ecological integrity of the park, and that ecological integrity includes a lot of human activity.

I am concerned that human activity could increase exponentially to the detriment of the park and the legislation could not stop it.

Mr. Arnold Chan (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member for York South—Weston talked in his excellent speech about the importance of connectivity between the Oak Ridges Moraine and through the Rouge national park. Some of the stakeholders, including, for example, the Friends of the Rouge, have suggested that we should have wider corridors, perhaps in the order of about 600-metre corridors.

Does the member have any particular comment with respect to the suggestion that is coming from the Friends of the Rouge Park?

• (1555)

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, I will not get into specifics about the actual width of any particular corridor.

My comments were that if the park can be expanded to include lands to the north that connect the park to the moraine, which is the source of the water that flows down the Rouge River, then it would provide us with a better opportunity to protect what eventually flows down into the park. It would provide us with a better opportunity to study, to enhance and to hopefully preserve what is a wonderful ecological piece of the city of Toronto that requires a protection that is currently not provided.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to ask a question on this very important issue among many colleagues from Scarborough, which I think is an exciting thing because that is where I am from originally.

Given the government's environmental track record, given the government's laggard behaviour vis-a-vis climate change—in fact it was only a few years ago it was denying the existence of climate change—is the member for York South—Weston confident and comfortable that the protections in the bill would see the Rouge national urban park fulfill all of its possibilities and potential?

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, I am not confident that the current wording of the bill would provide the protections necessary so that this park could achieve its fullest potential. Although we are agreeing to support the bill at second reading, that is one of the reasons we will be presenting significant amendments to the bill, in order to reinforce the notion that the ecological integrity of the park is something that requires protection, not merely consideration.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Resuming debate. I have noted the other members who were not able to get up on this last round of questions and comments. We will do our best to work them into the next round or two.

The hon. member for Davenport.

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour to rise in this place on behalf of the good people of Davenport in the great city of Toronto to debate this bill on an urban park in Toronto. In fact, it is in Scarborough, which is a little dear to my heart, given that I grew up in Scarborough.

It is important to note that there are many people who grow up in Toronto and in greater Toronto area, and there are many people who live in Toronto, who are cut off from the natural endowments the city offers. There are many reasons that happens. I am dwelling on this because of the importance of having green space in an urban context. That is important, as long as people have access to it.

I have spoken to seniors, for example, in my community who came to Canada as immigrants and worked very hard their whole lives and never actually had the opportunity to experience the lake. In fact, they did not even realize that Toronto was right beside a lake. They have not had the opportunity to explore the green spaces.

Scarborough has acquired a reputation, which I have always felt was incredibly unfair, even though I grew up at Markham and Lawrence, as being a concrete jungle. In fact, it has some of the most beautiful southern Ontario landscapes one could imagine. I invite you down any time, Mr. Speaker.

The issue I am raising is the issue of access. We have so much to offer in the city of Toronto, but we have a growing gap between those who can access these wonders and those who cannot. That gap largely hinges on economics and the income gap between the rich and the poor.

We have communities in the north part of our city with young people who have never gone downtown or visited City Hall, although these days, I do not know if people would want to visit City Hall. These young people have never visited the museums in downtown Toronto. They have never swum in the lake that is right there, at the side of the Gardiner Expressway.

A project that is going to create an urban national park in the eastern part of the city is incredibly important, if we do it right. The NDP has a number of questions about whether we are doing it right.

• (1600)

[*Translation*]

The NDP is strongly in favour of protecting the ecological integrity of Canada through the creation of national parks. However, these parks must be protected by strong environmental legislation backed up by sound, scientifically based management plans. The Rouge Park is no exception.

[*English*]

There is conditional support. We support moving the bill to committee to strengthen it. Part of the reason is that we do not trust the Conservative government on the issue of environmental protection. It has a long record of doing everything in its power, which is considerable right now, unfortunately, to diminish, denigrate, and demolish environmental protection right across this country. We are very concerned about this.

Government Orders

The way the government has first made a promise then delivered a bill that is weaker than the promise gives New Democrats some real concerns.

From coast to coast to coast, Canadians recognize the importance of oversight and well-funded institutions that protect our environment and well-funded parks.

New Democrats have many concerns about this bill, which we want to address in committee.

[*Translation*]

We believe the national park legislation and management plan should adopt the longstanding Rouge Park vision, goal and objectives; strengthen and implement the existing environmental protection policy framework; protect a healthy and sustainable 100 km² Rouge national park area; restore a sustainable and integrated natural heritage system; dedicate more of the park to nature and public enjoyment instead of private leases; transition towards smaller-scale farms that support healthy local food production; clearly prioritize ecological health and conservation of the Carolinian and mixed woodland plain forest; ensure that all activities that may affect the Rouge national urban park undergo staunch environmental assessments; and, finally, include a science-based management plan.

[*English*]

In other words, we have a long list of items we need to raise. We have a park, and the partner with the largest parcel of land is not in support of the direction the government is going right now. That also underlines a serious concern, and the concern is about leadership. The concern is about the seriousness with which we take our actions in this regard.

It is incumbent upon the government to work with all the stakeholders in a manner that moves this park forward in the way it was described initially. It is also important that we look at the natural value and work together to find a way to bring this forward in the manner in which it was initially planned.

On this side of the House, we look forward to working with our fellow parliamentarians to see this park finally realized with the strongest environmental and ecological protections it should have.

• (1605)

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to compare and contrast the legislation in front of us with provincial legislation that governs provincial parks.

Yes, it is true that provincial legislation includes the words “ecological integrity”, but those words mean little if we look at the overall provincial legislation. Let us compare the two pieces of legislation, provincial and federal, with respect to two issues, logging and hunting.

The Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006, says, in respect of hunting, in subsection 15(2), “hunting is permitted on the public lands...added to Algonquin Park”. What does the federal statute say in section 18? It says, “it is prohibited to (b) hunt a wild animal in the park”.

I will do a second quick comparison. The Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006, says, in subsection 17(1), “timber

may be harvested for commercial purposes in Algonquin Provincial Park”. The federal statute says, in subsection 18(2), “It is prohibited to (f) harvest timber in the park”.

The federal legislation in front of us clearly is stronger in respect of the actual outcomes of protecting the park. The Rouge Park would be a better protected park than Algonquin Provincial Park, and that is why I am happy that the member opposite is supporting this legislation.

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, I was listening for a question, but it was a comment.

I would simply like to say that words matter in legislation. Of course, we stand here day in and day out and in committee battling over words, because they actually mean a lot. That is why we are raising these concerns about the weakening of the protections that are in the bill right now.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, putting aside the very strange comment we just heard from the opposite side, my question is not about whether the Conservatives do or do not support hunting and do or do not support logging. Apparently they do not anymore. That is news, I guess, to many of their party followers.

The issue that I think concerns us all is the environmental standards that have to do with the quality of water, the quality of soil, and the quality of the natural infrastructure.

Does the member share the concern of our party that the federal standards do not speak to water quality and the quality of the biosphere and to whether some of the runoff from local farms may in fact damage the quality of the natural environment we seek to protect with the park designation?

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, the short answer is yes, we share those concerns. It is why we are calling for the legislation to include some of these issues, such as a transition toward smaller-scale farms that support healthy, local food production, which of course would mitigate some of the potential runoff.

We have concerns. The Conservatives have been weak on environmental protection in general. The issues with the bill before us underline the concerns that we and many Canadians have.

• (1610)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague from London has brought in a private member's motion on urban forests. Clearly one of the things that is important is having a national strategy, and that is part of her bill.

Could my colleague share with me the importance of protecting parks and urban forests and the importance of the national strategy the NDP has put forward?

Mr. Andrew Cash: Mr. Speaker, as my colleague for Beaches—East York never wastes an opportunity to underline in this place, Canada is increasingly an urban country, and we are facing a climate change crisis. We are facing increasing difficulty in our urban areas with extreme heat and various other issues related to climate change.

Government Orders

What is important is the precedent it sets and the signal it sends to other levels of government that we take these issues seriously in our urban areas.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before resuming debate, it is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst, Rail Transportation; and the hon. member for Vancouver Quadra, National Defence.

[*English*]

Mr. Arnold Chan (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House today to join the debate on Bill C-40, an act respecting the Rouge national urban park.

This legislation would create the first national urban park in Canada, which is a positive step forward for our national park system. Having an area of pristine wildlife so close to 20% of Canada's population will offer a great value to the entire nation.

While the proposed Rouge national urban park is not within my riding of Scarborough—Agincourt, I grew up only a few short kilometres away, and I can tell the House that the Rouge lands are truly a national treasure. I remember attending my first day camp near the metropolitan zoo in Toronto when I was about 8 or 9 years old, and in many ways this was my first exposure to the splendours of the Rouge Valley system. Because I came from an immigrant family without significant means, this was in many ways my first exposure to the outdoors.

More recently, over the past number of years I have had the pleasure of going back to the Rouge Valley as a cub pack leader and as a scout troop leader, participating in programs such as the 10,000 trees for the Rouge program and planting trees in the Rouge park to add to the wonderful biodiversity found there.

My family has taken significant advantage of the Glen Rouge campground that is run by the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority.

It is a fabulous opportunity. We have heard from colleagues on all sides of the House about the tremendous accessibility that this potential national urban park would afford to many residents within the greater Golden Horseshoe. It represents one of the last great unspoiled wildernesses and also happens to be coupled with some of the most outstanding farmland in the country. For example, my family has also had the privilege of going on a number of occasions to Whittamore's Farm. Those were opportunities to expose my family to farming culture, particularly as we enter into the fall harvest season.

Let me simply join my colleagues on all sides of the House in expressing my excitement at the potential opportunity that the creation of this new national urban park would afford to our community and to all residents within Toronto.

I am also particularly pleased to see that the government is building upon the tremendous work that has been done by the provincial government with the establishment of the Greenbelt in 2005. The Greenbelt is one of the largest and most successful areas

of preserved green space in the world and serves as a showcase for what an urban green space can offer on a large and significant scale. I had the privilege of being in the legislature as a staffer at the time, and I watched this wonderful legacy unfold.

Unfortunately, at that time the Ontario Conservatives wanted to allow continued development on this precious piece of land, as we may hear from certain members in this House, so it is heartening to see support from the government in the House today and to recognize that it is indeed time to establish a national urban park. I do want to recognize the tremendous work that has been done on all sides of the House and by many stakeholders over the last 20 years, work that has led to where things sit today.

The Rouge national park would provide important connectivity with, for example, the sensitive Oak Ridges Moraine leading to the shoreline of Lake Ontario. Earlier the member for York South—Weston highlighted the importance of creating linkages and connectivities between these various important spaces.

• (1615)

We support this particular bill, and it appears that essentially all parties across this House will likely be supporting the bill as it moves forward at second reading. However, like most things that the government does, its efforts to create this new national urban park, at least from our perspective, fall short in some key aspects.

This park is to be created using lands currently held by the Government of Ontario. In fact, lands being held by the Government of Ontario would represent approximately two-thirds of the total park lands if and when they were transferred to federal control. However, despite the fact that intergovernmental talks have been going on for a number of years and should be a shining example of intergovernmental co-operation, sadly, we have sometimes seen strife taking place between the two orders of government.

For example, when the government was supposed to have engaged in a positive announcement last summer when it was signing the memorandum of agreement to create this national park, it unfortunately turned out to be a bit of a public relations nightmare.

I do not necessarily want to diminish the long-standing efforts of the many people who have been the driving force behind this park or on the long consultative process that has occurred, but if the government was truly committed to building a first-class national urban park, we have to ask why so many environmental groups are applauding the recent actions of the Ontario government.

In this debate I have heard the accusation that the Government of Ontario is playing politics with the formation of the Rouge national park, but the question is who is playing politics with whom. For example, it was this government that blindsided the provincial government when the announcement was made last year about the ongoing development of the Pickering airport at the same press conference, and the Government of Ontario was not given a heads-up that it would be happening.

Government Orders

Let us be frank: it is not as though the government has a reputation for sound environmental bona fides. Members could just read, for example, the Commissioner of the Environment's report that was issued yesterday, which was damning in its conclusion that we would not meet the Copenhagen greenhouse gas emission targets by 2020.

This is the same government that has also seen substantial reductions in Parks Canada staff, despite the fact, as I will acknowledge, that the government has set aside a significant amount of funds, in the order of over \$140 million, for the creation of this new national urban park.

It is no wonder that the Government of Ontario and leading environmental groups just do not trust the government when it comes to acting in the best interests of the environment.

After a decade of environmental management of the Greenbelt, which the Rouge park will become an integral part of, the Government of Ontario requested some assurances from the federal government that it would continue to protect this land, as was befitting a national park.

Sadly, this is where the bill fails the people of Scarborough, the people of Toronto, and, frankly, all the people of Canada. In our view, this bill is missing some key details. For example, it is missing details about how endangered species will be protected, plans showing how heritage areas will be treated, details about how the park will be zoned for different uses, such as farming, hiking, and protection of natural habitats.

I stand with the provincial government in asking the government to honour the memorandum of agreement that it signed with the Province of Ontario. I do so because it is important that in establishing a first national urban park, we ultimately get it right.

Despite the fact that the Liberal Party will be supporting this piece of legislation on second reading, we strongly urge the members on the government side, particularly when it goes to committee, to support efforts on this side of the House. These efforts will be undertaken by the member for Halifax and the member for Scarborough—Guildwood, our party's environmental critic, who will attempt to work with members on the other side to fix this particular bill and strengthen the legislation that is required when it returns to this House on third reading.

• (1620)

While the Liberal Party supports the creation of this park and especially the significant expansion of a park system that the residents in this particular area already enjoy, it is critical that we get this right the first time. I ask the government to continue to work with the Province of Ontario and with key stakeholders to build the best possible legislation before this House. I ask the Conservatives to honour the agreement that they signed and to work with the requests that have been advanced by key environmental groups. I also ask them to simply be open to changes in order to build a bill that will have a lasting legacy for all of our children.

A national urban park in a major urban centre like Toronto can ignite the imagination of Canadians and bring joy and knowledge about the importance of the outdoors, just as it did for me when I was

a young lad. However, it can only be done if we get it right, and it can only be done if we make the necessary changes to this bill.

Let me conclude by asking the members opposite to work with all sides of the House so that we can fix this bill.

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member might have his timelines a bit mixed up. In fact, this government was prepared to announce the signed memorandum of agreement that we had with the Liberal Ontario government back in May, but a provincial election was called. The election terminated the announcement, because we cannot make those types of announcements during provincial elections.

The member is asking us to live up to the signed agreement; we are quite prepared to do that. We will do that tomorrow. We are prepared to live up to the signed agreement that we have with the Province of Ontario. If the member would like to call the provincial minister here, or we could go there, we will actually sign that agreement that we have in place. We have had it in place since May.

The member talked about the provincial government and its desire for ecological integrity. In 2012, it was not ecological integrity it wanted; it was a \$120 million cheque that it wanted for the land. Forget ecological integrity; give them \$120 million, and we could have the land, no problem. That was what was said then by the Province of Ontario.

What this comes down to now and what the Liberals have to account for is this. The Friends of the Rouge Watershed, as he mentioned, want a 600-metre ecological corridor. The result would be that 1,700 acres of class 1 farmland through the northern part of this riding would have to be taken out of production. Is it the Liberal Party's position that it supports the removal of 1,700 acres of class 1 farmland from production and the eviction of farmers from that area?

• (1625)

Mr. Arnold Chan: Mr. Speaker, to answer my hon. friend's question, let us keep in mind that we are dealing here with a number of significant environmental groups that have challenged the Conservatives to make this bill a better bill.

At the end of the day, these critical voices in this particular debate feel that the current government simply has not moved far enough. We are not simply talking about the removal of some farmland that the member for Oak Ridges—Markham is concerned about; we are trying to ensure that we create a national urban park that ultimately meets its fundamental objectives. Those fundamental objectives are to preserve the health of the ecological system, to ensure that we have sufficient forest cover, and to ensure that an incredibly degraded watershed system has the capacity to renew itself.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech.

I would like to remind the House that during the 1993 election campaign, the Liberals made wonderful promises about Canada's national park system in their red book.

Government Orders

Unfortunately, from 1993 until they were thrown out of office in 2006, they accomplished very little. They found all sorts of reasons for failing to expand the national park system.

How can my colleague expect to have any credibility in defending this particular issue?

[*English*]

Mr. Arnold Chan: Mr. Speaker, it is the same Liberal government that signed the Kyoto protocol. I take exception to the suggestion that anyone on this side of the House has a bona fide environmental challenge.

The national parks system was grown under a series of successive governments, and we continue to move forward on moving the park system through this legislation today.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, rather than dwell on past struggles and rather than focus on what is not in the legislation, let us talk about what we can do. My question to the hon. member is this.

I was a member of a city council that voted on about \$17 million to put that land into the park. It is great to see it coming to fruition. However, there is this perpetual notion that somehow farmers are about to be evicted. I am unaware of any level of government that wants to evict the farmers or do anything other than protect the park from being sold off at a future date.

Could the member explain to me if he knows of any plan by anybody to evict any farmer on the land in question?

Mr. Arnold Chan: Mr. Speaker, it is typical of the other side to set up this sort of false dichotomy to put up this kind of ghost or bogeyman that somehow we are opposed to things that are intended to impact those particular individuals who currently occupy the lands. I simply have not heard any plans to take class A farmland out of production.

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to commend the member opposite for supporting the bill at second reading. That is a good thing. I am happy to hear the Liberal Party will support it.

I want to make a third comparison between the legislation in front of us and the provincial parks legislation. I have already made two earlier comparisons between the two pieces of legislation in respect of hunting and logging, so I want to make a third comparison.

The Provincial Parks and Conservation Reserves Act, 2006, states this about mining, “new aggregate pits may be established in areas of Algonquin Park”. The federal legislation in front of us today states, in paragraph 18(2)(g), “it is prohibited to...explore for minerals, oil or gas, or conduct an extractive activity, including mining, in the Park”.

The legislation in front of us today is stronger than the legislation that protects provincial parks. Rouge national urban park would be better protected under this legislation than provincial parks that are protected under provincial legislation, such as Algonquin Park and Killarney Park.

• (1630)

Mr. Arnold Chan: Mr. Speaker, I know my friend has been listing a series of comparisons with respect to this bill against

provincial parks legislation. Each particular park has its own unique features. In many cases, a lot of these issues were grandfathered in as part of the parks system when they were established.

The key point here is this. What will we do when we are establishing a new national park? What standard do we want to achieve? Are we going to compare that against an existing provincial standard or do we want to get this right the first time when establishing this new national urban park?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over the past few years, I have enjoyed some wonderful visits to Toronto. This great city has many lakes, islands and scenic views. It is a place that everyone should visit.

When they were in power, the Liberals had plenty of opportunities to invest in Canada's national park system, but instead, they helped to create a \$2.8 billion backlog. That is why I am surprised by what they are saying.

They could have done this work and even more. The leader of the NDP, who was once the Quebec environment minister, knows what should be done with the national parks.

[*English*]

Mr. Arnold Chan: Mr. Speaker, ultimately we are attempting to strengthen a particular bill and we are counting on the honourable intentions of all the members to work collectively together to get the best legislation we can moved forward. Let us not dwell on the past.

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have tried to follow this debate, to keep an open mind and get a best feel for it. My colleague talked about bona fides and past Liberal governments. I am very fortunate to represent an area that benefited from a Liberal government that was very committed to environmental stewardship. It put \$280 million toward the cleanup of the worst toxic site in our country, the Sydney tar ponds. This is the first year people have come and enjoyed the place.

I will give my colleague an opportunity to expand further on how he feels confident in our party's approach to all environmental issues.

Mr. Arnold Chan: Mr. Speaker, I simply want to stress that the best of intentions exist on all sides of the House to get the best kind of legislation forward with respect to Bill C-40. We have faced a number of environmental challenges over many years. Regardless of which government we have dealt with, we have tried to bring forth solutions that ultimately are in the national interest.

That is the nature of our critique today with respect to the bill. We are simply trying to get a better bill forward, just like we tried to deal with the tar ponds issue in the past.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that as the member for Parkdale—High Park, I may well be the only member in the House who has the word “park” twice in the name of my riding, so I am very happy to stand to speak about parks.

Government Orders

Specifically today we are debating Bill C-40, An Act respecting the Rouge National Urban Park. Coming from an urban riding in downtown Toronto where the city is growing in its urban density, we are seeing increasing numbers of condos, high rises and growing stratification of people of different economic means. Some are doing extremely well by the economy, some are staying fairly stable, but then some are falling further and further behind. A University of Toronto professor from my riding, David Hulchanski, has talked about this idea of three cities, where we have three distinct populations living as one. I see that even within the area I represent.

Some people in our community are very well off, professionals, people who buy homes that are not just worth one million dollars, but multi-million dollars. They have a lot of choices about where they go and how they participate in recreational activities. They can choose to belong to a private club in the city. There is a waterfront club right in my riding. They can take a vacation in northern Ontario or anywhere else in the world. Then a growing number of people, and I see in my community, do not get to go anywhere. They stay in the city. They have never been to Muskoka or out on a boat. Their options are rather limited.

In our riding of Parkdale—High Park, we have High Park, which until now has been the largest park in the city. Through the visionary action of John and Jemima Howard many years ago, this park was bequeathed to the city with the understanding that it would always remain free and open for access to all. On a summer day, families, not just from the surrounding communities but from all over, come to the park. They have picnics, play sports and conduct a variety of activities in the park. It is a really wonderful thing to see. In fact, people from around the world come to see the cherry blossoms when they are in bloom, a gift from the Japanese government. It is a source of great enjoyment.

My kids played soccer there. There is skating and many activities, but it is also an area where there has been a great deal of work to protect the natural environment. There are old oak forests that are unique to the area and a great deal of work goes into protecting and preserving the natural ecology of that area. It is a great treasure of which we are all very proud.

The notion of creating the first national urban park is quite exciting. I see the same potential for communities to participate, to have a variety of activities or access to nature in a way that, frankly, a lot of people growing up in downtown Toronto in towers, whether condos or rentals, would otherwise not have the ability to do.

• (1635)

It is in fact a real treasure. It is something that one generation can pass on to the next for the enjoyment of people in the future. It is something that has to be done well. It has to be done right. The fact that this park would be created is something that we are very pleased about. As New Democrats, we will be supporting it. I do, however, want to raise some legitimate concerns about the creation of the park.

One thing I have come to really understand, with the creation of High Park and the legacy of John and Jemima Howard, is that they got it right when they bequeathed this park to the city. They got it absolutely right. In downtown Toronto, if this land were made available for development today, I cannot imagine how much money these acres of waterfront property in the centre of the city would be

worth. However, this parkland has been protected for the present and future generations.

How this new Rouge Park is structured will be very important. The Rouge Valley is home to over 1,000 species of plants and animals, including a number of species at risk. It is made up of Carolinian and mixed wood forests. They are very rare forest areas. It is certainly an area worth preserving and protecting.

The fact that the federal government would create this national park was laid out in the first throne speech of the Conservative government. We applaud that. This would be the first urban national park in the country and one of the largest in the entire North American continent. The funding was laid out for this in the economic action plan of 2012. The 2012 budget said that there would be \$143 million over 10 years for the development and interim operations of the park, and \$7.6 million a year for continuing operations.

The main issue is the framework for the creation of this park and the protection of the environment within it. The park is currently protected under a whole range of existing action plans that were developed for this area. There has been incredible community engagement in the creation of this park. There have been management plans, greenbelt plans, watershed plans, heritage action plans, a variety of plans into which the community has poured a great deal of consultation, expertise and hope to get this right for the future.

Unfortunately, Bill C-40 does not embrace the strong foundation of conservation policy that is provided in the plans that I just mentioned, in addition to the laws that have been passed already. The concern is that the bill, if it passes unchanged, will undermine the ecological integrity and the health of the Rouge Valley.

Again, I would like to say that if we do not get it right from the beginning and if we do not set out the proper framework, the after-effects will be felt by generations.

We want to see a Rouge national urban park that incorporates the same legal protections as other national parks. That would really make sense. This is an idea that has broad support from environmental organizations, local community groups and residents. While we believe that the bill is a step in the right direction, we have concerns that, with the way it is drafted, it will undermine the ecological conservation of this land for the future.

• (1640)

New Democrats think that the legislation and management plan should adopt the long-standing Rouge Park vision, with its goals and objectives. We think the bill should strengthen and implement the existing environmental protection policy framework. We believe that more of the park should be dedicated to nature and public enjoyment and that we should be setting as a priority the ecological health and conservation of the Carolinian and mixed woodland plain forest.

Government Orders

There are a number of other points that others have raised. Again, I want to give the government credit for moving on this. I talked about High Park in my riding and another feature of my riding is the western boundary, which is Humber River. The Humber River is the only national urban heritage river in the country. It is the only heritage river that can be reached by subway. It is a very wonderful, historic place in the city.

There was great concern when, in one of the Conservative omnibus budget bills, the protection for this river was removed, except for the mouth of the river. Therefore, I thank my colleague from York South—Weston, who introduced a bill to once again resume the protection of the Humber River, because it is of tremendous heritage and environmental importance to our community, and we believe, as it is designated, to the country as well.

In closing, I want to urge my colleagues to really think through the content of the bill. Again, we salute its existence, but the detail of it, the specific measures of it, can and should be improved upon and we hope that all parties can work together in the House to make that happen.

• (1645)

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member opposite for supporting the bill at second reading. I thought she gave some very thoughtful comments on it. Maybe I can give her some further assurances about the legislation in front of us in respect of the protection of the ecology of the park.

While clause 6 says, “The Minister must...take into consideration the protection of its natural ecosystems”, section 4 of the bill says, “Rouge National Urban Park...is established for the purposes of protecting and presenting...the natural and cultural heritage of the Park”. That is quite categorical.

Further on, subclause 9(2) says:

The management plan must set out a management approach, by area, that includes the following:

(a) the protection and presentation of natural and cultural heritage....

The bill is so protective of the park that it will be illegal to pick a flower in the park. It will be illegal to pick a flower because subclause 18(2) says:

...it is prohibited to...

(c) remove a wild animal, a plant, a part of a plant or any other naturally occurring object or product of natural phenomena from the Park...

It will be prohibited in this law to pick a flower in the park. That is how strong the protection will be of the park in the legislation.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, I certainly would not want to encourage people to try to capture deer or racoons or any other wildlife in the park, although, I dare say, I am sure that in spite of that, the odd flower may get picked in some cases.

I appreciate the member's comments on this and thank him for his work on it, but there are people who have been engaged in the development of the plans—and he may be as well, yes—but let me quote the general manager of Friends of the Rouge Watershed, Mr. Jim Robb, who said:

I have participated in almost all of these processes.

The current Rouge Park concept deviates significantly from the existing plans. For example, in the new vision of the Rouge national park concept, there's no mention of the words “ecology” or “ecosystem”. That's the primary vision of the existing Rouge Park, which has been approved multiple times over two decades. Another thing is the 600-metre wooded corridor. That's enshrined in provincial legislation through the green belt. It's in Rouge Park plans consistently. There's no mention of that 600-metre wooded ecological corridor within the Rouge Park concept.

I could give you more examples.

These are people who have been involved in this for some time and I express their concerns.

• (1650)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the member would care to comment on the proposal that is often put in front of the Toronto City Council vis-à-vis the Toronto Zoo, which is one of the major pieces of property contained within this park.

The proposal comes from people who are not seeking to conserve, and I would use the word “conserve” as in conservative. There are members of council who are not in support of conserving this piece of public property in the hands of city government but rather want to privatize it and send it out the door. In other words, they want to sell the Toronto Zoo, sell a piece of this park, because they do not believe it should be under public ownership or public operation.

Perhaps this is one of the concerns the province also has about the agricultural lands. If we do not protect the agricultural lands from being sold out from the park and do not protect them as part of the park, these too so-called conservatives will not conserve the park and in fact will simply transact it to private sector partners for development.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, as a Torontonians who has frequently visited the Toronto Zoo, and over the years my kids have come to love it along with generations of kids, it is something we want to protect in the public sphere.

In my comments, I spoke about kids and families who do not have cottages and do not get to travel or get out of the city. The zoo may be their only chance to see even domestic animals up close.

There was a tremendous campaign that our local community in Parkdale—High Park led to protect the zoo in High Park. The goal was to keep it public, accessible and open, and we were successful in that. I believe the City of Toronto will also be successful in keeping the Toronto Zoo open for all to have access to and not turn it over to private hands.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her remarks. I have to say that they fit in quite significantly and appropriately with some work that I have been doing regarding the urban forest.

As members will know, my leader was an environment minister who worked with great integrity in order to protect the Mont-Orford provincial park. He has encouraged me with my urban forest program because, first of all, I come from the Forest City, and second, the urban forest is an incredibly important asset, as will be the proposed asset that we are hearing of in terms of the Rouge Valley trees, which protect the environment, create a canopy, cool us down, prevent flooding, provide storm protection and have great health benefits.

Government Orders

My question is in regard to the concerns around the 600-metre wooded corridor. In light of the importance of an urban forest, could my colleague please comment on the significance and importance of that corridor?

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for London—Fanshawe for that important question.

A question that is very pressing in urban centres is this. How do we protect not just green space but the green canopy?

There are many Toronto city councillors, including ours in Parkdale—High Park, who have been very vocal and adamant about the need to increase the tree canopy in our area and in the city of Toronto generally. The last thing we want to have is a concrete or asphalt wasteland. We want to have all of the health, environmental and ecological benefits that the tree canopy brings.

I thank my colleague for London—Fanshawe for her work on this issue. It really speaks to the importance of this corridor and to preserving access to this wooded area and the tree canopy, not just for now but for generations to come.

• (1655)

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will have to ask the question again. I have asked it so many times it is actually frustrating.

The member cites the Rouge Park plan. First, the bill we brought forward actually goes further than the former Rouge Park Alliance's plans for the park. The protection the bill offers goes further than the 2001 protocol that was put in place by the Rouge Park Alliance.

The plan members opposite are citing is the 1994 Rouge Park plan that calls for a 600-metre corridor, a 1994 plan, a plan that is 20 years old. That is not the basis by which the Rouge Park was moving forward.

The 1994 plan would see 1,700-acres of class one farmland removed from production. The Liberals have said they support that. Some New Democrats have said they support that as well. The Liberals have said they want to see farming in the area progress to small-scale farming.

Again I ask, how do we create a 1,700 acre ecological corridor, remove 1,700 acres of class one farmland from this area, and not evict the farmer? It is impossible to do. How do we do that without evicting farmers? Why is the member citing a report that not even the Rouge Park Alliance accepts as the plan with which they would move forward?

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, in my remarks I listed a number of reports and plans. The member is right that there are plans going back to 1994. However, the quote I just gave from the general manager of the Friends of the Rouge Watershed, Jim Robb, was from 2012.

Mr. Paul Calandra: Citing a 1994 report.

Ms. Peggy Nash: There was a comment he made in 2012.

Mr. Speaker, through you, I think this is my time to speak and not a debate, so I would ask the member to hold his comments while I have the floor.

The importance of creating parkland is that there can be multiple uses. There could be an area for an ecological preserve, where we can preserve a purely natural environment. There could be walking paths. There could be other activities in the park. There could be a zoo. There could be many uses.

To say that by preserving the ecology of the park or insisting on woodlands in the park, somehow that would have to cover every square foot is simply not correct.

However, I do trust the people who have been active on this issue for 20 years or more who are saying they have concerns about the bill and that their work is not being listened to.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to lay out a bit of the timeline around the bill and some of the key issues.

Before I get into that, I do want to take a moment in this House to thank my colleagues, the member for Scarborough—Rouge River and the member for Scarborough Southwest. They have been really helpful. It has been great to work closely with them as MPs in the NDP who are right there where this park is. It has been great to get their advice from the ground to hear what is going on.

I also want to take a minute to thank some of the environmental organizations and local organizations that have been very helpful with our analysis of the bill. They include the Suzuki Foundation, the Canadian Parks and Wilderness Society, and the Friends of the Rouge Watershed. When we are here on the Hill, we try to do an analysis of legislation as it is presented, but it is hard to know exactly how it will play out in local communities. They have been very helpful to us.

There was a study at the environment committee on urban conservation. The NDP was successful in getting two days set aside to specifically look at Rouge Park. I think this was last year. That was incredibly helpful. We got an update from Parks Canada officials and we did hear witnesses. We heard about the incredible consultation that has been happening, over 25 years of consultation, and the work around this park. We heard about the great work that Parks Canada staff have been doing to try to ensure everybody is at the table and to deal with creating a piece of legislation that would create a park. That is very difficult.

This is an urban national park. Even the concept of it is challenging, because there is a highway in this park. There are farms in this park. It is an incredible gift to think that we could have a park that we could access by subway. However, with those gifts come great challenges.

Often when bills are presented in the House, we will hear from government; usually the minister will speak to the bill. Then we will usually hear first from the opposition critics to lay out a party's position and see where we are going.

I am actually speaking at the end of this debate. I have been listening to it since the beginning, with a small break for committee duty. It has been really interesting. I am not saying that the way a politician says, "This has been interesting". It has been really interesting. There has been actual debate in this House.

Government Orders

My colleague, the member for Beaches—East York, sits behind me and I turned to him in the last of debate and asked, “Are you listening to this? People are talking about ideas. There’s a little give, a little take.” I learned from each and every speech, regardless of whether it was a government member giving the speech, a Liberal member, or an NDP member. Why is that? I think the people who are speaking in the House to the bill have a vested interest in it. They are MPs from the area predominantly. They are MPs with expertise. They are MPs who have been engaged in this issue and engaged in the creation of the park for years.

In that debate, that honest debate that has been happening here in the House, I would say that most members have put aside their talking points and have talked about some of the real issues. I find that to be incredibly refreshing.

I think everybody who has spoken to this bill really does want to ensure that we get this legislation right, but they also want to ensure that we create this park. That is priority number one.

I will say that I will be supporting the bill, and I know that my caucus is behind that recommendation. As members know, critics make recommendations to their caucuses on different pieces of legislation. We are united and we do believe this is a good project, the creation of this park. We strongly support protecting land through creation of national parks writ large, as long as those national parks are backed with strong environmental legislation.

We also support this legislation, the creation of Rouge Park, Canada’s first urban national park. That is the first thing.

The second thing is that I will come to this debate with an open mind, an open heart, and put down my talking points as well, to try to present some ideas, try to present some proposals, because I do see problems with the bill, and I am not alone on that. However, I think there are solutions, and I do believe that we as parliamentarians could work on those solutions together, alongside the community, and actually come up with a stronger bill.

● (1700)

A lot has happened with this bill. It was introduced in June, and frankly, I think some politics were involved in that. I think it was hastily introduced in this House, but we had some byelections happening in the Scarborough area so it is good for the government to say, “Look. We are going to hold up this bill.” That is just my assumption, but I do think it was tabled pretty hastily. There continue to be politics when we see what the Ontario government has been doing and saying via the media.

This park will be 58 square kilometres. The Province of Ontario owns two-thirds of that. The federal government owns about one-third, with some small parcels owned by Markham and Toronto. In order to create this park, we need a transfer of lands. Some 5,400 acres of parkland would be transferred from the Ontario government to the federal government. At least that was the theory we were working with in June. It is not so much the theory now.

In early September, we heard that the Ontario government was thinking about not transferring the land because of the issue of ecological integrity. I will get to the ecological integrity piece in a minute. About a week later, we saw that the Minister of the Environment said that the federal government would move ahead

with this park anyway. I have a concern that we would be creating a park that we do not actually know what it will look like. We do not actually have the full parcel of land. I will admit I would rather create a very small park than no park at all, but we are in a situation where we are not 100% sure what land is going to be involved.

What is the issue with ecological integrity? This is important. The National Parks Act specifically states, “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”. The first priority is maintenance or restoration of ecological integrity.

This bill says that the minister must take into consideration ecological integrity. That is a big sticking point for a lot of people.

Community groups have come out and said that this is not acceptable, that it is a lower standard of environmental protection. I understand what they are saying and I believe what they are saying.

There was actually a pretty good release put out by a number of groups, including Environmental Defence and Ontario Nature, for example. They said:

We call on the federal 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 development that made ecological integrity the main purpose of the park and the top priority for park management.

That is their concern. I share their concern, but I think we can figure this out.

Listening to the debate here in the House, I have heard my colleagues, in particular the members for Wellington—Halton Hills and Oak Ridges—Markham, talk about the fact that this is an urban park and it is complicated because there are farms and there is a highway. How do we have this standard of protecting ecological integrity when Highway 401 is going through it? That says to me that maybe we legitimately need a different standard, not a lower standard but a different standard, for urban parks. I buy that. That is something worth exploring.

The problem I have right now, though, is that I have trust issues with this government.

An hon. member: How come?

Ms. Megan Leslie: Well, I am the environment critic.

I do not trust that this is just a different standard. It says to me that this bill is opening the door a crack, and other parks legislation will also have a different and perhaps lower environmental standard, so it is hard to trust that this is what the issue is.

● (1705)

However, if we are looking at a new consideration of ecological integrity or a new consideration of urban parks, then I think we need to have that conversation. I think it needs consultation. I think we need to hear from witnesses at committee.

I think we need to, as I said, put the talking points down and have an open and honest conversation about what we do with urban parks. I think there is a solution. I am not sure what it is yet, but I think we can get there together.

Government Orders

I often think about the fact that there is a concept that the environment is a precious, pristine thing that is unsullied and is separate from us. It is not. The environment is us. It is the people. It is our buildings, roads, and farms. We are part of the environment.

There has been a lot of work and thinking on that concept of the environment, so I know that the work is there that can help us get to a solution here. I do not know if it is an amendment to the Parks Act. I understand if the government does not want to reopen the Parks Act, but maybe we need to. Maybe it needs to be a definition for urban parks.

We need to come together. I think we can do it, both opposition MPs and government MPs and communities.

One might think I am naive in thinking we could actually work together to get this done, but I live in eternal hope. I actually have some good experience. There is precedence here in this House, even in this current majority government.

I am really proud of the work we, all of us, were able to do on the Sable Island National Park to bring that bill forward, to raise concerns about some problems with the bill, and to actually get assurances and commitments from government, whether it was via the park management plan or reporting, that dealt with some of the problem areas and with our concerns.

As a result, there was near unanimous support, with the exception of one. Everyone wins in that case. Everyone feels good and confident, and we know we have a good piece of legislation before us. I hope we can do the same with this bill.

I challenge all of us to maybe come up with a definition for ecological integrity, or maybe to come up with a different standard for urban parks, something we can all agree on. I do not believe that anyone in this House, or any party, wants weaker environmental protection. I take the government at its word on this.

I think we can figure this out, and then maybe if we can figure this out, we could actually apply that solution to something like Gatineau Park, for example. Members may remember that the NDP has brought forward legislation several times, I think it is three times, to clearly establish boundaries and to clearly establish roles when it comes to Gatineau Park. This is a park that exists without a plan or real boundaries or definition. I will say that most recently, legislation was brought forward, in the form of Bill C-565, by my colleague, the member for Hull—Aylmer. We think this is another opportunity for an urban park with strong environmental legislation.

Unfortunately, the government voted against that bill—

Mr. Raymond Côté: That is a shame.

Ms. Megan Leslie: It is a shame, Mr. Speaker. It was a good piece of legislation. Maybe we can stake out a bit of ground on what we do with urban parks. I am not anticipating thousands of them or a flood of urban parks, but it is a real issue, and we need to wrap our heads around it.

If we can establish what urban park protection would look like, then maybe we can apply it to Gatineau Park and have another win in this House.

I will go back to ecological integrity just for a minute, because members may think I am giving up too much here, that just because this is an urban park, we would not have strong environmental protections and we would not strive for ecological integrity. I want to be very clear and let the House know that this is not what I am saying.

● (1710)

I believe that a park next to or in Canada's biggest city should continue to strive for ecological integrity.

Ecological integrity is the goal of environmental protection within Rouge Park, Greenbelt, and Rouge watershed plans as well as in provincial and national park legislation and policies. I know that the government agreed to meet or exceed existing provincial policies. I have heard debate in the House saying that this legislation exceeds them, but I hear from the community that it does not meet them, so we need to figure this out.

Ecological integrity must continue to be the priority for the scientifically planned and zoned national habit systems of Rouge national urban park. We could look at different standards, such as net gain and ecosystem and watershed health, perhaps. It could be utilized for areas zoned for agriculture, infrastructure, hamlets, campgrounds, et cetera. I am not sure, but it is something we can talk about. If we think about it, lots of our provincial and national parks have highways, towns, railways, and other infrastructure within them, yet they still manage to prioritize that goal of ecological integrity.

We really want to see the creation of this park. We really want to work together to try to come up with a solution that addresses these concerns about ecological integrity. I look forward to hearing the witnesses at committee. I look forward to hearing speeches in the House afterward to see where we are, and I look forward to some questions.

● (1715)

Hon. Michael Chong (Wellington—Halton Hills, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for supporting Bill C-40 at second reading. I appreciate her feedback and comments on the bill.

I just want to emphasize that while provincial legislation does include the words “ecological integrity”, that same provincial piece of legislation allows for natural resource extraction, logging, and hunting in Algonquin Provincial Park. While the legislation in front of us today does not contain the words “ecological integrity”, when we look at the totality of the bill, in its prohibitions to protect the environment and the flora and fauna of the park, it is far stronger than the provincial legislation currently in force in the province of Ontario. Therefore, if we look at the bill in its totality, it will effect a better outcome for Rouge national urban park than what we have in the provincial parks in the provincial park system.

Government Orders

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I understand what my colleague for Wellington—Halton Hills is saying, but it is a bit of an apples and oranges comparison. We can say “no” to hunting yet still not protect ecological integrity. They are different beasts.

We all have to acknowledge that there are people who have serious concerns about this specific issue of ecological integrity. What do we have to do as legislators? We have to address that head on. Instead of saying that we are going to ban hunting and picking flowers, we need to confront the issue of ecological integrity and figure out a solution. Organizations like Environmental Defence have a problem with this, and I trust the work they do. They do incredible work. They do incredible analyses. Therefore, let us deal with the issue of ecological integrity, not whether or not a flower is going to be picked. It is a different issue.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's speech very carefully and heard her several times suggest skepticism in trusting the government to protect the natural state of this park.

As I mentioned in my earlier question, I was a member of city council. It spent \$17 million to add a substantial amount of land to this park. Is she aware that some of the most prominent Conservatives on that city council, people with the last names of Ford, Holyday, who went on to represent the Conservatives in the provincial legislature, Denzil Minnan-Wong, and David Shiner, another Conservative candidate, all voted not only to refuse to protect the land from being converted from a naturalized state into something else but also actually refused to acquire this piece of property to add to the park?

Is that perhaps one of the reasons she is skeptical of the Conservatives, whose members, when they have a chance to add land, to protect the naturalized state, actually vote against the interests of the park, the interests of Scarborough, and the interests of the city of Toronto on this? Is that one of the reasons the member might have some skepticism about the authenticity of the Conservative position?

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I welcome my colleague from Trinity—Spadina to the House. This is my first opportunity to interact with him here in the House since his election.

He asked if I knew about this, and I have to admit that I did not, because I do not follow Toronto politics closely. I am here, and I follow politics back in my home province of Nova Scotia. It is interesting that he can bring it to the floor and talk about that here.

I am not going to comment on Toronto municipal politics, but I will talk about skepticism. I did say that I was going to put down my talking points and I have, but this is the truth. We have seen cuts to Parks Canada. Twelve hundred jobs have been cut in parks across Canada. If parks are so important, how are we going to protect them, especially when we are seeing job cuts, park hours diminished, and parks being closed for different seasons? This is where my skepticism comes from. People cannot go to Kejimikujik National Park in my home province in the winter anymore. A lot of the communities around these parks rely on them being open year-round. It is unfortunate.

● (1720)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Halifax for her speech. This member has an excellent understanding of her file, and I thank her for that.

This bill proposes to create the first urban park. If there is something we should be the best in the world at, it is creating parks. I would even say that this is in our DNA as Canadians. This bill presents an incredible opportunity.

Aside from the challenges that my colleague mentioned in her speech, what other challenges could we expect to encounter with this bill?

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou for his kind words.

Indeed, it is an incredible opportunity for us to be part of a government—I think that the opposition and all the other parties are part of the government—that will create Canada's first national urban park. What are the other challenges? As I already mentioned, I am a bit concerned about funding for the parks. Is it possible to create a new national park with the cuts to Parks Canada? Will there be enough scientists and employees in the park to support its objectives? I have a lot of concerns.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): I know that the debate is coming to a close, Mr. Speaker.

The member for Trinity—Spadina and the Liberal Party have been talking about ecological integrity. Their position is that if the Toronto Zoo were added to the park, it would increase the ecological integrity of the park. By allowing people to come to the park and look at the giraffes and polar bears within the park, we would be increasing the ecological integrity of the park.

I want to thank the hon. member across the way for supporting the bill to get it to committee. I appreciate that, but I have a comment.

The farmers in this area have been treated terribly. Their lands were originally expropriated by the Liberal government in the 1970s. Many of them were evicted from their lands. Some were given one-year leases that they have been operating on for over 40 years. This park would give them the opportunity to have some stability for the first time in over 40 years. In the past, they were evicted from their lands for the creation of the Bob Hunter Memorial Park. They were evicted from their homes. Those class one farmlands were reforested.

When the bill gets to committee, I would ask the member to really listen to the farmers and look at the reports. The creation of a 600-metre ecological corridor, which will take 1,700 acres of class one farmland out of production, based on a 20-year-old report, cannot be done without evicting farmers.

Private Members' Business

While I thank the member for her support, I hope that when the bill does get to committee, she will really take a look at how the farmers have been treated in this area, listen to what they are saying, and look at what would happen to them if we created this zone in that area.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate that comment. I have heard the member raise this issue several times in the House.

First, when I think about ecological integrity, I do not see it as necessitating the re-naturalization of farms. For me, that is not on the table. The member talked about other examples of farms in the past that were re-naturalized, but I do not see that as part of the equation here.

The member is very right when he talks about the fact that these farmers have had one-year leases. I do not know about other members, but if I had a one-year lease and I did not know what was coming down next year or what was going to happen, I do not know if I would make a lot of investments in my farm for the long term. I do not know if I would make those environmental and ecological investments. I do not know if I would engage in the best practices when it comes to farming and the environment because I might not be there next year.

There is some opportunity to listen to farmers, but also to talk to them and engage with them.

• (1725)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am not aware of a member of any party or any organization suggesting that we close down farms or even shrink the size of them. However, if I recall my history correctly, Bill Davis, who was a Conservative premier of the province, was one of the people who led the fight to expropriate the farms and close them down in favour of the Pickering airport.

Is that yet another reason why the member is skeptical of the Conservative Party's real commitment on this file to preserve these farms?

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I am a bit at a loss. Once again, I am not up on my Ontario politics and ancient history. I am here before the House, looking at this bill.

I appreciate the member's intervention. Again, this is why we have members of Parliament from all across Canada. It is so they can bring their first-hand experience to the floor here. I take what he is saying as an interesting addition to this debate.

I do have skepticism on a lot of other fronts when it comes to the Conservative government and the environment. Another good example, in addition to the cuts to Parks Canada, is that on climate change and reducing emissions. We were promised oil and gas regulations. That was eight years ago. Earlier today in question period I asked where those regulations were. There is neither hide nor hair of them.

My skepticism is well warranted. We have these questions on the environment, we have these issues that we want to have heard, we have ideas that we want to see turned into regulation or legislation and we have not seen them.

I am very willing to take a risk and work with everybody in the House. I believe we all want the best for this park, I believe we all want strong environmental protections for this park and we all want to see it created.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Is the House ready for the question?

Some hon. members: Question.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development.

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

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

SERVICE CANADA MANDATE EXPANSION ACT

The House resumed from October 2 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.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 5:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-247.

Call in the members.

• (1810)

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

(*Division No. 253*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Aglukkaq
Albas	Albrecht
Alexander	Allen (Welland)
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Andrews	Armstrong
Ashton	Aspin
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Barlow
Bateman	Bellavance
Bennett	Benoit
Benskin	Bergen
Bernier	Bevington
Bezan	Blanchette
Blaney	Block
Boivin	Boughen
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brison
Brosseau	Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)	Bruinooge
Butt	Byrne

Private Members' Business

Calandra	Calkins	Scarpaleggia	Schellenberger
Cannan	Carmichael	Scott	Seeback
Caron	Carrie	Sellah	Sgro
Casey	Cash	Shea	Shipley
Chan	Chicoine	Shory	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
Chisholm	Chisu	Shory	sor)
Chong	Choquette	Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
Christopherson	Cleary	Smith	Sopuck
Clement	Côté	Sorenson	Stanton
Cotler	Crockatt	St-Denis	Stewart
Crowder	Cullen	Strahl	Sullivan
Cuzner	Daniel	Sweet	Thibeault
Davidson	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Tilson	Toet
Day	Dechert	Tremblay	Trost
Devolin	Dewar	Trottier	Trudeau
Dionne Labelle	Donnelly	Truppe	Turmel
Doré Lefebvre	Dreeshen	Uppal	Valcourt
Dubé	Dubourg	Valeriot	Van Kesteren
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)	Duncan (Etobicoke North)	Van Loan	Vaughan
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseau	Vellacott	Wallace
Dykstra	Easter	Warawa	Warkentin
Eyking	Falk	Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Fantino	Fast	Sky Country)	
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Footé	Fortin	Williamson	Wong
Freeland	Freeman	Woodworth	Yelich
Fry	Galipeau	Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Gallant	Garneau	Yurdiga	Zimmer— 268
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère		
Gill	Glover		
Godin	Goguen		
Goldring	Goodale		
Goodyear	Gosal		
Gourde	Gravelle		
Grewal	Grogue		
Harper	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)		
Harris (St. John's East)	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)		
Hawn	Hayes		
Hillyer	Hoback		
Holder	Hsu		
Hughes	Hyer		
Jacob	James		
Jones	Julian		
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)		
Kellway	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)		
Kent	Kerr		
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)		
Lake	Lamoureux		
Lapointe	Larose		
Latendresse	Lauzon		
Laverdière	Lebel		
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	Leef		
Leitch	Lemieux		
Leung	Liu		
Lizon	Lobb		
Lukiwski	Lunney		
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie		
Maguire	Mai		
Marston	Masse		
Mathysen	May		
McCallum	McColeman		
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)		
McLeod	Menegakis		
Michaud	Miller		
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)		
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)		
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)	Mulcair		
Murray	Nantel		
Nash	Nicholls		
Nicholson	Norlock		
Nunez-Melo	Obhrai		
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz		
O'Toole	Pacetti		
Papillon	Patry		
Payne	Péclet		
Perreault	Plamondon		
Poillievre	Preston		
Raitt	Rajotte		
Rankin	Ravignat		
Raynault	Regan		
Reid	Rempel		
Richards	Rickford		
Rousseau	Saganash		
Sandhu	Saxton		

NAYS

PAIRED

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried. Accordingly the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

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

The Speaker: It being 6:10 p.m., the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

* * *

CRIMINAL CODE

The House resumed from June 18 consideration of the motion that Bill C-590, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (blood alcohol content), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I begin my comments by complimenting the member who brought this private member's bill before us. All of us who are seized with this issue recognize the extreme sorrow and difficult personal circumstances that many members of this House bring to this issue. I recognize that speaking to this issue with a great deal of sensitivity is required. In particular, as these events are televised, there are members of our larger community who are also watching the debate tonight, hoping that some of the tragedies in their personal lives have meaning.

Private Members' Business

I would also reflect upon this issue as it has presented itself to me in my political life. Many in this House may not know that I was a member of the Toronto Police Services Board, which is seized with this issue of impaired driving, drunk driving, in large part because it is the canary in the coal mine. It is quite often members of the service who get into trouble while driving under the influence of alcohol who are starting to show signs of significant other issues which are impairing not only their ability to operate a vehicle in their private life, but to fulfill their duties in their public life as well.

I can recall going case by case through the process as a member of the Toronto Police Services Board, monitoring and listening to some of the professional standards cases and sometimes appeals. I had to adjudicate to make sure that we eradicated not only drunk driving, but also the additional problems that accompany it from the service.

Personal stories were related to us, not by the victims' families, but the families of individuals who were convicted, who were caught drinking and driving. Those stories are the ones that stick with me. I have heard as a journalist, as a member of the community, and as a citizen of this country the horrible stories of the victims' families and those who have survived these terrible incidents, but the people struggling with alcohol have an equally compelling story to tell and it is something which we also must consider as we look at the bill. Those stories are part of a larger problem that we are not addressing.

One of the reasons we do not have a handle on this issue is that criminal behaviour though it may be, sometimes it is not eradicated through the Criminal Code and the courts. Sometimes we need to treat the underlying issues that are creating the situation.

What concerns us on this side of the House about this piece of legislation is that it is part of a pattern that we are starting to see in the approach to the Criminal Code.

First, this is a private member's bill that is changing it. That creates a patchwork of ad hoc changes to the Criminal Code. The Criminal Code is a very complex document which is interwoven and needs to be sustained as a comprehensive document. When we start amending it with one-off private members' bills, we start to unravel a comprehensive system of criminal justice in this country. We are concerned about that, even though we support the general intent of this private member's bill.

The other issue is we know that punishment for this crime alone has not stopped it. While this bill proposes increased sentences, while we support the notion that exceptionally high levels of blood alcohol content should carry a stronger sentence, and that repeat offenders are the most likely to be the most lethal offenders, and while we share that there needs to be graduated and increased progressive punishment on this issue, we know that increasing the sentences in provinces like Prince Edward Island and others has not been a deterrent nor impacted the rate of offence. While it is an important way to deal with this criminal behaviour, it does not necessarily eliminate the behaviour. The reason is that alcohol addiction which may lead to drunk driving is not just a criminal issue; it is fundamentally a medical issue. The addiction is a medical phenomenon as much as anything else.

This is a private member's bill, and therefore, it stands out by itself. We do not see accompanying it an increase in treatment

centres. This concerns us. I would hope that in committee or perhaps in consideration of these remarks the government across the way would consider a different approach on this issue. We do not see anything dealing with the regulatory requirements around alcohol acquisition. We do not see accompanying this bill things which would prevent this disease from taking hold of people's lives which puts them in a situation where, through impairment, they may make the horrible decision to drink and drive. Therefore, we think a more comprehensive approach is a more appropriate way to move forward on this bill.

● (1815)

However, we have seen the cases of highly intoxicated people with a pattern of repeat offence, and public safety and justice require us to take these exceptional steps to safeguard our streets and the innocent people on them, protecting people from those who, through their disease and high level of intoxication, are incapable of protecting themselves let alone anybody else. As a result, we will be supporting the bill.

To return again to the notion that mandatory minimum sentences and stronger sentences act as deterrents, we are very skeptical as to whether that will be the impact of the bill. We have heard the conversations and debates on the other side of the House suggesting that a stiffer penalty is all that is required to eliminate certain forms of crime, but it just simply is not true. There is no evidence to support this argument.

We also know that the best way to deal with alcohol addiction, the disease of alcoholism, is not to criminalize the behaviour but to treat it medically. I can tell members that in the city and province I represent, treatment beds are as scarce as scarce can be. They are as scarce as a national housing program.

Part of what we need here are those housing programs, which would provide support as people get out of jail and out of shelters and out of addiction. We need to treat those issues so that we do not end up with impaired people operating vehicles or committing any other crime. We need that second piece in this legislation to give us confidence that the government is truly serious about dealing with the tragedy of operating a vehicle while impaired.

I started my comments by talking about the situation faced by police service boards across this country and how people with extraordinary complications in their lives find themselves behind the wheel drinking and driving. The stories we heard were quite clear: the lack of treatment is fundamentally what is in front of us.

Private Members' Business

If we really want to prevent impaired people from getting behind the wheel, the answer is not the sentence that lies behind being caught and convicted. It is stopping them from being alcoholics to begin with. It is stopping that level of impairment from taking hold in their lives to begin with. It is this proactive approach that saves not only the lives of the innocent people who might be killed through impaired driving, but also the lives of the people who are seized by alcoholism.

However, we just do not see a comprehensive approach nationally that would support some of the provincial and local efforts. This private member's bill, as a single gesture, is important, and we support it, but unless it becomes part of a comprehensive approach that is proactive in nature and medical in essence, we are not going to solve this problem, and there will be more tragedies.

With those remarks and that analysis, I will resume my seat. I will support this private member's bill, but I do so with reservations.

● (1820)

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to speak today in support of Bill C-590, an act to amend the Criminal Code (blood alcohol content). This private member's bill was tabled by the member for Prince Albert on April 9 and it addresses minimum penalties for the crime of impaired driving.

As much as there has been improvement in this area of the law over the past 40 years, more has to be done. Impaired driving cases are familiar to all Canadians. Everyone knows a family member, a friend or someone in their community who has been touched by this crime.

Over the past decades, we have managed to lower the number of persons who are killed in collisions involving alcohol-impaired driving. Lives have been saved by the efforts of families, individuals, schools, service organizations, police and legislatures.

I would like to recognize the really great work of the people who volunteer for Operation Red Nose, in the month of December, who volunteer to drive until the wee hours of the morning to keep impaired drivers off the road.

However, even with the improvements, the sad reality is that impaired driving remains a pernicious and persisting crime. It is the single most committed crime at 12% of crimes, according to the Statistics Canada 2011 Juristat on impaired driving.

Impaired driving is said by prosecutors to take up about 40% of provincial court trial time. The great tragedy is that hundreds of deaths and thousands of injuries every year from impaired driving are, each and every one, avoidable.

With the arrival of the motor car at the turn of the 20th century, it soon became clear that death and injury from crashes were part of the new motorized driving reality.

In 1921, Parliament enacted the offence of driving while intoxicated, in recognition of the reality that driving while intoxicated greatly increased the risk of a crash.

In 1951, Parliament added to the Criminal Code the offence of driving while impaired, in recognition that it was not only someone who was intoxicated who posed a higher risk of a crash.

In 1969, Parliament repealed the driving while intoxicated offence and followed some other western nations in setting a blood alcohol concentration above which it is an offence to drive.

The over 80 offence rested upon the development of technology to measure blood alcohol concentration, which is converted using a blood-to-breath ratio into a blood alcohol concentration.

Over the years, Parliament has acted many times to improve the impaired driving provisions in the Criminal Code, which brings me to Bill C-590.

The bill could be seen as taking the step in the right direction. The bill is also in the spirit of one of the recommendations of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights that was made in the committee's 2009 report, entitled "Ending Alcohol-impaired Driving: A Common Approach".

The report was in favour of setting higher penalties for individuals who drove with a blood alcohol concentration which was over 160. Currently, a reading above 160 on an approved instrument is an aggravating factor for Criminal Code sentencing purposes.

Bill C-590 proposes two things.

First, it would create a new offence of driving while over 160 that would be a straight indictable offence. The mandatory minimum penalties would be even more severe than a case where someone drove while over 80. On a first over 160 conviction, there would be a mandatory minimum penalty, or MMP, of a fine of \$2,000 and imprisonment for 60 days. On the second offence, there would be an MMP of 240 days imprisonment.

The second thing that Bill C-590 would do is to raise the MMP where an offender caused a crash involving a death or bodily harm while driving impaired or over 80 or when the driver refused to provide a breath sample knowing of the death or bodily harm.

Right now, in these cases, the MMP is a fine of \$1,000 on a first offence, 30 days imprisonment on a second offence and 120 days imprisonment on a subsequent offence.

● (1825)

For a first offence that causes a death or bodily harm, Bill C-590 would set an MMP of \$5,000 and 120 days imprisonment. For a second offence, it would be 240 days imprisonment.

It would be advisable to consider at committee whether there should be a higher MMP for causing death than for causing bodily harm. I understand that the current MMP was set for the purpose of avoiding situations where a person who drove impaired and/or over 80 and/or refused to provide a breath sample could be given a conditional sentence of imprisonment.

Private Members' Business

Where there is an MMP, no conditional sentence is available. However, the MMPs for the cause of death or bodily harm scenarios are the same as the MMPs for impaired and/or over 80 and/or the refusal where there is no death or bodily harm. In death cases, the courts are clearly giving sentences measured in years and are not giving the \$1,000 MMP. It may be helpful to hear from witnesses, and to see whether there needs to be any adjustment to the MMPs.

I am pleased that Parliament is being given the opportunity to respond to one of the recommendations in the 2009 report of the standing committee. We can establish MMPs that will have a deterring effect and that will have an effect on public safety because they incapacitate the high blood alcohol concentration drivers and the drivers who kill or injure in offences of impaired driving, over 80 driving or refusal to provide a breath sample.

I ask all parliamentarians to join me in supporting Bill C-590.

I would like to put my notes down and just tell the House a bit of a story.

It is a story of a nurse from Newmarket who had spent 25 years of her nursing career at what was then York County Hospital, who at the end of her career had determined that there were other opportunities for her to provide service and had dedicated the end of her career to serving people who were AIDS patients. She was providing personal service as a private duty nurse to those people.

It was Friday, February 8, 1991, when that nurse left Newmarket to drive to Kleinburg to a special patient. Somewhere around the Ansnorveldt road, a driver who was driving over 85 miles per hour came across five lanes of traffic and hit that nurse head-on.

She did not survive. It was my mother's birthday. Things need to change.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, drunk driving is a public safety issue that deserves more of our attention. That applies to our assessment of whether the legislative measures in this bill can help eliminate this scourge.

It goes without saying that enhancing road safety involves several factors, from the quality of physical infrastructure to Criminal Code provisions penalizing drunk drivers.

I would like to go over some key numbers that illustrate the devastating impact of this scourge on families in Quebec and Canada. Some 5.4 million Canadians say that they have a family member or friend who has driven drunk or caused an accident. We know that with this type of statistic, when people talk about a friend or an acquaintance, they are sometimes talking about themselves, but because they do not want to incriminate themselves, they say they know someone. That number is still astronomical.

Nearly a quarter of the Canadian population has a family member or close friend who has been a victim of a drunk driving accident. According to Transport Canada, alcohol was a factor in nearly 30% of traffic accident fatalities from 2003 to 2005.

Unfortunately, my riding, Trois-Rivières, has troubling statistics on this too. According to a study that looked at June of 2013, the Trois-Rivières police service made about one arrest a day, 28 that

month to be precise. Impaired driving is still the leading criminal cause of death in Canada.

These statistics show how important it is to examine this issue. I support moving forward with the bill introduced by my colleague, the member for Prince Albert, so that the committee can look at it, study its impact on sentence length and ensure that the provisions comply with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and Canadian criminal law.

The Criminal Code of Canada has very strict laws and sanctions for impaired driving. Specifically, several Canadian provinces have in place a three-tier system based on blood alcohol content. The first tier is zero milligrams of alcohol for young and novice drivers. The second tier allows for administrative sanctions in some cases for a BAC over 0.05 milligrams. Lastly, drivers with a BAC over 0.08 milligrams are liable to sanctions under the Criminal Code of Canada.

Furthermore, new provisions were added in the Criminal Code and came into force on July 2, 2008. This means that there are now nine distinct offences related to impaired driving. Unfortunately, despite the introduction of more coercive measures, the Canadian Police Association recognizes the challenges faced on the ground in terms of combatting this scourge.

In addition to the human cost related to this phenomenon, the average cost of impaired driving accidents in Canada from 1999 to 2006 has been estimated at \$1.9 billion per year. This estimate does not include any of the social costs that result from those offences.

With respect to Bill C-590, it would be interesting to explore whether reducing mandatory minimum prison sentences for impaired driving causing death is the right thing to do here. It would be useful to debate this, because these mandatory minimum sentences are shorter than existing sentences. Reducing mandatory minimum sentences for impaired driving causing death could prove counter-productive. According to the jurisprudence, minimum penalties tend to become the default penalty. In other words, minimum penalties become the norm, rather than being reserved for the least serious cases or those where there are mitigating factors.

Accordingly, it would be entirely reasonable to expect defence lawyers to ask for the minimum penalty, unless the Crown can prove that the defendant's crime deserves a punishment that will serve as an example.

The federal Criminal Code is not enough to address the risks to road safety caused by impaired drivers. The duty to enforce the law in this area is shared by the federal, provincial and territorial governments.

Private Members' Business

•(1830)

There are a number of solutions that we can implement incrementally to deter impaired drivers from getting behind the wheel and endangering others. One of the deterrents that can be implemented is random breathalyzer tests for blood alcohol concentrations.

In Ireland, the Road Safety Authority believes that random breathalyzer testing has led to a 23% reduction in the number of highway deaths. That is something that could be considered. This last measure is just one of many options available to us to effectively fight delinquent behaviour.

To introduce an effective measure that will eradicate this scourge, we have to consider the fact that drunk driving is the manifestation of social problems that coercive measures alone cannot address. By adopting this approach, we could transform our legislative framework and make it preventive as well as punitive.

Preventing impaired driving must be based on campaigns that look at much more than just drunk driving and also raise awareness among drivers of the link between alcoholism, violence and risky behaviour.

Impaired driving is above all a social problem. We have to consider ways to prevent risky behaviours and create public policies with the ultimate objective of reducing risky behaviours in our society—including impaired driving—rather than creating a legislative framework that depends solely on coercion. Alcoholism does lead to crime, but we must remember that coercion can make it worse.

Preventive social policies, such as those that seek to address the socio-economic determinants of alcoholism, produce more effective results in the long term by taking a holistic approach to the problem, which requires the intervention of health professionals, social workers and members of police forces.

In closing, I support the bill introduced by the member for Prince Albert. I believe that sending it to committee will provide the opportunity for more in-depth analysis of how to achieve the desired results.

We should also be looking to technological advancements for solutions. For example, I am thinking about car locks that are opened with a number combination instead of a key. They make it more difficult to open the door if the driver has had one too many and is not fully coherent. Opening the door requires some thought, and the door is prevented from opening if it is not unlocked within a given time frame.

The Criminal Code, new technology and international experience in this area should all be part of our collective thought process as we determine how we can put an end to this problem, which has disastrous consequences for families in Quebec and Canada.

•(1835)

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Resuming debate with his five-minute right of reply, the hon. member for Prince Albert.

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank all of my colleagues for their suggestions and good advice on this piece of legislation.

This legislation came about because of a guy by the name of Ben Darchuk. Ben Darchuk was the owner of Ben's Auto Glass. He was killed by a drunk driver, a drunk driver who was also under the influence of drugs. Ben had a family. He had a business. The impact on his family, his business, and the community was immense.

It seemed to me that we needed to do something to take guys who are over twice the legal limit off the road. It seemed to me that we needed to have some teeth in a piece of legislation so that when these people hit the courts, they would not just go through that revolving door; they would actually have consequences for being over twice the legal limit.

This bill would not fix everything. There is more we need to do to address drinking and driving. There are more ideas out there on prevention and maybe on the criminalization side of things too. I am open to all of those ideas. There is no question about that.

The goal, at the end of the day, is to get these guys off the road, to get these guys out from behind the wheel of a motor vehicle. It is a very simple goal.

It heartens me, and I am happy to see, that my colleagues are going to let the bill go to committee. This is great, because the committee can do great work on this piece of legislation. It could improve it, and in fact, I hope it does improve it.

I appreciate the constructive criticism from members of the House. I appreciate the professionalism my colleagues showed toward this piece of legislation. They took partisanship out of this legislation and focused on what we are trying to accomplish here today.

I am excited and happy to see the bill go to committee. I know that the committee will do the great work that I know committees can do. We can all take comfort in knowing that when this piece of legislation passes, we will have made a step forward that will probably save even more lives. At the end of the day, that is what we want to do. We want to save lives.

I would like to thank all of my colleagues for their support on this piece of legislation.

•(1840)

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.

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

A motion to adjourn the House under Standing Order 38 deemed to have been moved.

[*Translation*]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on October 1, I asked a question in the House about the concerns of New Brunswick municipalities. For those watching today, I want to come back to that question.

All of New Brunswick is up in arms because of VIA Rail's latest plan to transfer the responsibility for stations on the Montreal-Halifax line to municipalities, as if small municipalities were in a better financial position to look after train stations than VIA Rail and the federal government.

Will the minister make VIA Rail listen to reason and tell it that there is no way that the company can off-load its problems onto New Brunswick municipalities and that it must accept its responsibilities?

The Association francophone des municipalités du Nouveau-Brunswick adopted a resolution at a meeting. To put the situation of these municipalities into context, I will quote the resolution:

WHEREAS the federal government and VIA Rail, which is a crown corporation, have a responsibility to develop and maintain rail infrastructure across the country. More specifically, VIA Rail must ensure that it provides quality service to Canadians in every region of the country.

WHEREAS the federal government, through VIA Rail, is attempting to transfer to municipal governments its responsibility to provide quality rail service to Canadians in every region of the country without also transferring the financial resources associated with that responsibility, thereby creating an unfair system since the status quo remains for central Canada.

Be it resolved:

THAT the AFMNB send a letter to the Minister of Transport...thanking her for her commitment and efforts, which led to the investment of \$10.2 million by VIA Rail to repair the section of railway between Miramichi and Bathurst.

THAT the AFMNB show openness by supporting the redefinition of passenger service in light of more regional needs by helping VIA Rail to promote the survey to the best of the association's and its members' abilities, while sharing with VIA Rail the importance of ensuring that the Ocean train between Halifax and Montreal runs just as frequently as before.

THAT the AFMNB share with the Minister [of Transport] serious concerns about VIA Rail's approach, which seeks to reduce operating costs by offloading them onto municipal governments. This approach will create a two-tier railway system where stations in Canada's big cities will remain the responsibility of VIA Rail, while smaller municipalities, mostly in rural areas, will be asked to assume the costs of managing stations and to promote the public carrier's services free of charge.

What is the minister going to do? This is a crown corporation, and municipalities do not have the money to take over federal responsibilities. They do not even have enough money to take care of their own responsibilities.

I would like to hear what the parliamentary secretary has to say about that.

● (1845)

[*English*]

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak about VIA Rail and the government.

Adjournment Proceedings

Intercity passenger rail service is obviously an important part of our transportation system that benefits our economy and our society, as it connects Canadians literally from coast to coast. Recognizing this, our government provides VIA Rail Canada with an annual subsidy that in recent years has been supplemented by additional operating funding.

To allow VIA to deliver passenger rail services to Canadians, our government in 2013-14 provided VIA with \$305 million, a significant amount of funding, in order to operate and maintain its network.

In addition, our government is making unprecedented capital investments in VIA to allow it to make important improvements in order to modernize its operations. Our government has made available over \$1 billion in capital funding over the past seven years to upgrade and modernize portions of VIA's rail network as well as many of its railcars. It has also invested in information systems to introduce e-ticketing; intermodal ticketing with airlines, commuter rail, and bus companies; on-board Wi-Fi; and upgrades to its website in order to better serve customers.

Our government also provides support for other passenger rail services. We provide funding to two passenger railways owned and operated by first nations, one in northern Quebec and one in northern Manitoba. This funding allows those private companies to provide service to remote communities that have few alternative means of transportation.

All told, this is a substantial amount of funding. That said, these services also have to be provided in a way that supports the efficient use of taxpayer dollars, as we have said on previous occasions.

Maybe the member does not find that satisfying, but VIA Rail is in fact a crown corporation that operates at arm's length from the government. This means that the government does not in fact operate the railway. It does not get involved in day-to-day operations.

VIA Rail, then, is ultimately responsible for making business decisions on its operations, including how best to manage its costs to reduce its reliance on federal taxpayers while meeting its objective to operate a national rail system that is both safe and efficient. That is why VIA Rail has to continuously assess its markets and operations in order to decide how best to provide the most economically efficient service to passengers.

As the same time, our government has invested and will continue to invest in passenger rail in a fiscally responsible manner.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Yvon Godin: Mr. Speaker, I listened to the parliamentary secretary. He says that VIA Rail is a crown corporation, but at the same time it is a crown corporation that has a responsibility—as does the government, since it is holding the purse strings—to ensure that the train can travel from coast to coast, from Halifax to Vancouver. VIA Rail needs to know that the government is not there to oversee its daily operations and that it will stay out of VIA Rail's business, but that there needs to be a train from Halifax to Vancouver.

Adjournment Proceedings

VIA Rail should not be passing its costs on to the cities of Bathurst, Miramichi and Campbellton. It is unbelievable and unacceptable. Our cities back home and many cities across Canada do not have enough money to pave their roads and streets, and now VIA Rail wants to pass its debt on to the cities. It is all well and good to say that it wants to put its fiscal house in order, but it is the cities and towns that are going to pay.

I am asking the minister once again to meet with the municipalities, open her ears and listen—

[English]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Order, please. The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Jeff Watson: Mr. Speaker, as I have said previously in the House, it is important in this moment that we understand a few things.

First of all, there have been no recent changes to the frequency of service that the Ocean line provides between Halifax and Montreal. I think that has to be clear. Second, as I have said before, the minister has met in the past with l'Association francophone des municipalités du Nouveau-Brunswick and the Union of Quebec Municipalities to discuss VIA Rail in this important region. The minister is happy to discuss the Ocean rail line further with this association.

• (1850)

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it goes without saying that this is a time of great instability in the world. ISIL's murderous reign of terror in an already chaotic Middle East is only one of the many current global crises. Tumultuous periods such as this are why an essential responsibility of the Canadian government is to ensure that this country has the military capacity to defend its borders, as well as respond to major international crises.

This was well expressed in a 2003 report by the Canadian Defence and Foreign Affairs Institute, which stated:

The Canadian Forces are a vital instrument of national defence and sovereignty and a key implement for the achievement of Canadian national goals at home and abroad. A strong and modern military, designed specifically to meet Canada's security and foreign policy needs, will serve Canada's pride and Canada's interests. It is, therefore, incumbent on Canadian governments to ensure that Canada's military forces are well-funded, equipped to the highest standards, and recruited and trained to fight alongside the best, against the best.

The Conservative government has failed in its duty to do this, and failed in its duty to properly equip Canada's military.

Regarding Iraq, as I mentioned in my question, which we are debating tonight, the Liberals proposed a range of non-combat military and humanitarian contributions that Canada could make. We opposed the government's plan to enter a combat air strike mission in Iraq, as the mission and its goals were unclear. The Prime Minister had failed to make the case for taking CF-18s to Iraq and taking Canada into war.

While I have every confidence that our competent and experienced Canadian Armed Forces members will ensure the safety and effectiveness of the equipment used in this mission, the reality is that Canada's CF-18s are coming to the end of their life expectancy.

Currently, we have 77 operational CF-18s, all of which date from the 1980s. There were two rounds of upgrade programs between 2001 and 2010, yet another extension is now being planned as the government has neglected to secure replacements for this fleet.

The urgent need to replace Canada's CF-18s was signalled even before Canada's military operation in Libya. In 2008, six years ago, Major Ed Roberds published an article in the *Canadian Military Journal*, entitled "Stretching the Thin Blue Line: Over-Tasking the CF-18 Hornet". In the article, he noted:

The upgrading of our CF-18s will allow them to operate with other air forces in joint operations. Unfortunately, this upgrade does not fully address the airframe fatigue that is occurring on an aircraft initially intended for retirement in 2002....

...As the airframe gets older, more repairs are required, and our operational tempo requires a substantial increase in spare parts that must be transported to theatre when the aircraft are deployed. While we are spending a lot of money on a single layer of air defence, we may not have enough fighter resources to achieve the overall defence objectives that the current policy...have established.

Auditor General Ferguson's 2012 report exposed the Prime Minister for having hidden the real cost estimates for the F-35 fighter jets to replace the CF-18s. This is now on hold. We have no idea what the government is planning, and Canada's aerospace industry is paying the price. Moreover, the government cut another \$3.1 billion from military procurement in the last federal budget. Its cuts have resulted in a 20% reduction in funds available for spare parts and the maintenance of Canadian Forces equipment.

Sadly, Canada's military capacity is vulnerable. As proud of our troops as we are, the Conservative government's mismanagement of military investment and procurement is creating deep concerns.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me begin first by correcting the record. In fact, defence budgets are up consistently year over year under this particular government, and second, I take note of the member's underlying tone and lack of confidence in our forces to carry out the job.

As endorsed by the House of Commons yesterday, the government is taking strong action to respond to the grave security and humanitarian crisis created by ISIL. There can be no doubt about the threat posed by this group of extremists or the scale of the humanitarian crisis it has caused. It has violently seized territory in Iraq and beyond, persecuted ethnic and religious minorities, and driven more than a million Iraqi civilians from their homes. This has only exacerbated an already severe humanitarian and refugee emergency in that region.

Among the despicable acts ISIL has perpetrated are horrific acts of sexual violence against women and girls, including sexual slavery and using rape as a weapon of war. This government joins all Canadians in feeling the utmost sympathy for the people in Iraq, which is precisely why we have taken action to help those people in need.

Adjournment Proceedings

We have proposed a multi-pronged approach, which includes humanitarian assistance and advisory support for the people of Iraq, but humanitarian assistance alone cannot get to the people who need it while armed groups continue to threaten the population. Sexual violence and other abuses cannot be investigated effectively in the absence of security in the region. If permitted to remain in Iraq unchecked, we believe that the threat posed by ISIL will only grow worse over time and will further destabilize the region and worsen the humanitarian crisis.

As much as ISIL poses a serious threat to Iraq and the wider region, it also poses a direct threat to Canada. Very recently, ISIL called for the targeting of Canadians in their own homes. There can be no greater responsibility of a government than the safety and security of its own citizens.

That is why the government has decided, now supported by a vote in the House and by government members, to meet the threat of ISIL at its source. This began in August when the Canadian Armed Forces commenced airlifting military supplies from donor countries to Iraqi forces. Over 1.5 million pounds, in fact, of military supplies donated by Albania and the Czech Republic were successfully delivered by us in northern Iraq.

In addition, special operations forces members have been deployed to assist and advise Iraqi forces in effectively countering ISIL. Last week we announced additional military contributions to the coalition efforts in Iraq for up to six months. CF-18 fighter jets will join our allies and partners in conducting air strikes against ISIL targets. As well, we will contribute the Polaris aerial refueller and up to two CP-140 Aurora aerial surveillance aircraft.

Canada will not stand idly by in the face of the humanitarian catastrophe caused by ISIL.

● (1855)

Ms. Joyce Murray: Mr. Speaker, I am dismayed to hear the member saying something that is patently not true. The budget has not gone up year over year since the Conservative government came

in. In fact, by 2010, the freeze had started, and in 2011, the cuts began. This budget is slated to shrink by a total of \$2.7 billion in 2015 compared with 2011.

The calculations show that this budget is the equivalent of the 2007 budget when inflation is taken into account. As a percentage of GDP, as the World Bank has noted, the government is spending 1% of GDP compared with the Liberals having spent 1.3% of GDP. One per cent is the lowest since the World Bank began recording this in the 1980s.

This has led to a lot of chaos because of the cuts and clawbacks under the current government. It is making our military and Armed Forces vulnerable to not being able to serve future requirements, and the government should at least be open and transparent—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Jeff Watson: Mr. Speaker, we heard it ourselves, just now, from the member that she believes our Canadian Forces are not going to be able to carry out their mission. That shows a complete lack of confidence in our brave men and women and the material that they use to do that.

I find that very disappointing, however not out of character for the Liberals who presided over a decade of darkness when it came to the military. Those are not my words. It was a former military commander in Canada who said those words about the Liberals. We will not let that happen.

● (1900)

[*Translation*]

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 7 p.m.)

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