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(HANSARD)

Monday, December 8, 2014

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, December 8, 2014

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

• (1105)

[English]

NATIONAL HEALTH AND FITNESS DAY ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill S-211, An Act to establish a national day to promote health and fitness for all Canadians, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

The Speaker: There being no motions at report stage, the House will now proceed, without debate, to the putting of the question on the motion to concur in the bill at report stage.

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC) moved that the bill be concurred in.

(Motion agreed to)

The Speaker: When shall the bill be read the third time? By leave, now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Mr. John Weston moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

He said: Mr. Speaker, in Canada we are the true north, strong and free, but we can be much better.

In that context, I rise today to present Bill S-211 for third reading, a bill designed to create a national health and fitness day, a bill intended to raise awareness about the need for healthy physical activity in Canada, a bill intended to create a platform upon which all Canadians can move to do better.

The bill is the fruit of six years of work, of collaboration among legislators at all levels of government. This has been the product of a network of coaches, parents, and sports advocates across our great nation.

I am immensely proud of my Canada, a pride that crested during the Olympic and Paralympic Games, a pride that grows each time I walk into this chamber or return to the riding which I call the most beautiful place on earth.

However, as wonderful as our country is, a critical ingredient of our nation's excellence is a commitment to continuous improvement in all that we do. While in Canada we are strong and we are free, we can be much better as a nation than we are today.

We have a healthy nation, but we can do better. The problem drives deep, as its roots are in our culture and wedded to the routines that we have developed in our education, our work, and our play. Canadian cultural patterns reflect an increasingly sedentary lifestyle, fuelled by our growing addiction to the Internet and video screens. We must acknowledge the need to do better in promoting the health and fitness of our people.

The bill would respond to a need that touches the lives of all Canadians and literally shapes the people we are to become in future generations.

We have reached a low point in our history. Statistics Canada reports a continuous decline in sports participation, which, from 1992 to 2005, went from 45% to 28% among Canadians age 15 and older. This is the first generation of Canadians in which children may die at a younger age than their parents. There are less than 7% of young people who are physically active for six hours weekly. Obesity rates have climbed such that a third of people under 18 are overweight or obese, which means that they have 14 times the likelihood of suffering a cardiac event by age 50.

Canadians such as Whistler's Dennehy family have become increasingly concerned about a rising incidence of mental health problems in our people. Psychiatrists, counsellors, and others have a variety of solutions, but all agree that physical activity can improve mental health.

Our government has responded to this need with a variety of measures to improve Canadian health care. Increasingly, our government supports pre-emptive health measures designed to put the responsibility of healthy living where appropriate, in the hands of individual Canadians, parents, and families, not in the bowels of bureaucracy.

Last month, for instance, our government announced the doubling of the children's fitness tax credit, which, next year, will become a refundable tax credit. While this credit would be a targeted measure to help Canadian families lead healthier lives, this Conservative government has taken numerous other measures: reducing taxes over 150 times, and putting \$3,400 more into the pockets of Canadians each year due to tax reductions. These are measures which allow Canadians to invest in healthy physical activity for ourselves and our children.

Private Members' Business

As we move close to our new year's resolutions, I urge moms and dads across the nation to allocate these funds toward healthy physical activity, to involve their children, and to claim the tax credit.

As we look forward to Canada's 150th anniversary celebration, we, as a nation, have the opportunity to pursue trails to health, to shine a light on individual Canadians, our communities, and to become the fittest nation on earth. One proposal is to celebrate the 150th anniversary with active movement on the Trans Canada Trail.

We have a prosperous nation, but, again, we can do better. The economic consequences of these sad statistics doom our ability to provide adequate health care, unless we take effective and practical steps now. Declining physical activity and increasing obesity have triggered a surge in preventable diseases among Canadians. The Public Health Agency of Canada estimates that it costs a staggering \$7 billion annually to care for persons whose diabetes or cardiovascular disease relate to inactivity.

In addition to direct and indirect health care costs, the quality and productivity of working Canadians would surely improve if our people were healthier and fitter.

In addition to making the lives of Canadians better, there are many economic incentives for us to promote health and fitness for Canadians.

We have a nation of great volunteers, but we can do better. I thank the myriad of volunteers who have helped to bring Bill S-211 this far. Foremost among these are the dynamic duo of Parliament Hill: Pierre Lafontaine, president of Canadian Interuniversity Sport; and Phil Marsh, a senior manager at the Running Room. Seeking to galvanize legislators as role models, for five years, Phil and Pierre have shown up tirelessly on Tuesday mornings to run, and Thursdays to swim, with MPs, senators, and our staff. Pierre and Phil have a simple message: if we parliamentarians can squeeze physical exercise into our busy lives, all Canadians can do the same. It was our great coaches who underlined the key role of local governments in promoting health and fitness.

Other groups and people have rallied, operating as an informal advisory council to ensure that my work is relevant and productive. I thank Trans Canada Trail, ParticipACTION, Sport Matters, PHE Canada, Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, Heart and Stroke Foundation, Movember, Canadian Tire, the Fitness Industry Council of Canada, GoodLife Fitness, Sports Information Resource Centre, Canadian Sport for Life, Canadian Red Cross, Jumpstart, Canada Bikes, and other groups that have selflessly worked with us to get the message out. We are a great country, but to remain the true north strong and free, we have to be healthier and more fit than we are today.

Many volunteers in the riding I represent have also rallied to the cause. I include Rotarians, who promote the Ride for Rescue; Fit Fellas, such as Barrie Chapman and Frank Kurucz; Ashley Wiles, of Sole Girls; Vancouver Whitecaps, former captain Jay DeMerit; and Whistler's Olympic gold medalist, Ashleigh McIvor.

At this point, if members will indulge a personal insight, it has been said that behind every successful man is a surprised woman. There has been no greater supporter of my efforts to promote health

and fitness than my wife Donna, a personal trainer herself, and my favourite running partner. In fact, we met when we were running, and we have been running together ever since, in every sense of the word. I am delighted that she is with us today, as Bill S-211 nears the finish line.

While it is seldom done, I would also like to acknowledge the Herculean efforts of my staff, Marilyn McIvor, Jocelyn Hemond, Jessica Faddegon, Stephanie Betzold, Sue McQueen, and others, who have been the secret in organizing Bike Day in Canada, National Lifejacket and Swim Day on the Hill, and other events that have kept national health and fitness day afloat.

We have an active group of legislators, but, again, we can do better. I am honoured to work with my friend, the great initiator of this bill in the senate, Nancy Greene Raine, Canada's female athlete of the 20th century. Revered by Canadians as an articulate champion of fitness on and off the ski slopes, Senator Greene Raine shows up again and again to advocate for the matters that mean the most to British Columbians.

Six years ago, when the 2010 Vancouver Olympic and Paralympic Games were becoming a reality, she and I asked the people of my riding what we could do to create a legacy for all Canadians arising from that amazing extravaganza. The question was especially relevant because 70% of the Olympic sites were in the riding that I represent. Constituents told Senator Greene Raine and me that we needed to springboard from the enthusiasm for elite sport into a lasting legacy of health and fitness for all Canadians. Over the last few years, Senator Greene Raine and I have worked hard to involve our colleagues in both Houses on this project. In the course of these efforts, something rare and wonderful has happened. A consensus grew around the House, and members of all parties have consistently shown up to participate in the parliamentary fitness initiative. It is no coincidence that members in both Houses have also voted unanimously for this bill in the past.

Private Members' Business

I thank the Prime Minister, the Minister of Health, and the Minister of State for Sport for their great support. While the Queen may formally be the first lady of Canada, Laureen Harper is first lady in the hearts of many Canadians. She has also been a consistent supporter of our efforts. Along with the consensus, personal friendships have grown. I applaud the members for Sackville—Eastern Shore, Etobicoke North, and Saanich—Gulf Islands for their efforts in promoting health and fitness for parliamentarians, and, through parliamentarians, to all Canadians. I want to say, as well, how much I appreciate the friendship that has grown among us, regardless of party, in the course of these efforts.

For my colleagues in this House, I continue to invite them to pivot from their very real need to care for their own personal health, to look at themselves as role models in approaching their constituents to get active, and to keep our people strong and free, especially our local mayors and councillors.

● (1110)

The passage of this bill will raise awareness and create a platform for further action. I am grateful that individuals, organizations and legislators across our wonderful land, even before the passage of Bill C-211, have already begun to celebrate national health and fitness day, marked on the first Saturday of June each year.

However, even though our local governments are engaged, we can do better.

The specific goal of the bill is to encourage local governments to proclaim Canada's national health and fitness day and to define the day in some way that increases physical activity among Canadians. It is a blank cultural and civic canvas for all of us to use. Mayors, councillors and other leaders can create an event, such as a free dance class, a swim lesson, or even open the doors of recreational and fitness facilities on a complementary basis. So far, B.C. and the Yukon territory have proclaimed national health and fitness day. I urge the other provinces and territories to follow suit.

More than 156 municipalities across the country have proclaimed the day. Among the very first proclaimers were the municipalities in the riding I represent, West Vancouver, Squamish, Sechelt, Gibsons, Lions Bay, Whistler, Bowen Island, North Vancouver district, Powell River, and the three regional districts in the riding, Sunshine Coast, Squamish-Lillooet, and Powell River.

On May 30, the Federation of Canadian Municipalities added its powerful voice, voting to endorse the movement. Federation president Brad Woodside has encouraged all Federation of Canadian Municipalities' 2,000 members to proclaim the day, 156 Canadian cities strong and free, but we can do better. I look forward to the day when every Canadian town and city has proclaimed national health and fitness day.

As national health and fitness day comes into our nation's laws and traditions, it is a time when we can all focus on doing better in the area of healthy physical activity. I thank the many who have helped make this a reality. In voting for this bill on Wednesday, we in the House of Commons will all have contributed to the creation of an historic turning point, with a positive and lasting change made for our whole country.

Canada is strong and free, the best country in the world, but we can do better. With the enactment of national health and fitness day, I urge each and every one of my fellow Canadians to engage routinely in positive physical activity for themselves, their families, their communities, and their nation.

Yes, we are the true north, strong and free, but we will be even better than we are today. Canada will become the fittest nation on earth.

● (1115)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is very significant for us to recognize the importance of fitness. My understanding, in looking at the legislation, is that it would be the first Saturday in the month of June.

The member made reference to 150-plus communities today that recognize some form of proclamation for national fitness. Could he provide some feedback as to whether the one territory, the province and municipalities are all centred around that first Saturday in June?

[Translation]

Mr. John Weston: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

It would be the first Saturday in June, and more than 150 communities have already established this day even before it has been recognized by the House. British Columbia and the Yukon have both proclaimed a health and fitness day.

It is very easy for my colleague and other MPs to take a look at this proposal, which is now on my website.

Members may also borrow documents in order to encourage other mayors and city councillors in every Canadian town, city and community to make a similar proclamation.

[English]

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with great interest to the member's speech. I am a bit concerned about the claims he has made for the fitness tax credits. In this day and age, certainly in my riding, a lot of constituents simply cannot afford to put their kids in sports programs. The leagues, while run very efficiently by volunteers, are expensive. The government has proposed to put pennies in the pockets of people who actually need dollars in order to put their kids in sports programs and reap all the benefits.

I worry about a bill of this nature. The member has talked of extravaganzas and tax credits that, frankly, are not meaningful to a large proportion of Canadians. If we are serious about getting kids engaged in sports for all the great health and social reasons that flow from that, why is the government not doing something more meaningful to put real dollars back into the pockets of people these days who do not have them so their kids can participate?

Private Members' Business

●(1120)

Mr. John Weston: Mr. Speaker, I noticed the member for Beaches—East York was listening attentively. I appreciate that and his support with respect to previous votes on this bill. He has raised a good question with respect to what the government can do.

The government has brought in a children's fitness tax credit. It has also doubled that fitness tax credit. For the member for Beaches—East York and all Canadians, the good news is that it will become a refundable tax credit next year, which responds directly to the question of those people who are in lower income tax brackets.

However, the purpose of the bill is to encourage Canadians, mayors, councillors, and all of us to take responsibility for health and fitness somewhat on our own shoulders. The government is doing its part. We have an enthusiastic Minister of Health and Minister of Finance who have adopted health and fitness incentives in this refundable tax credit.

However, we, as role models in the House, as parents, as coaches and volunteers, need to take up the torch and encourage Canada to become the fittest nation on earth. We can do it. We have all the facilities, the lakes, the mountains and the trails. We are about to turn the corner to make us the healthiest and fittest nation on earth.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on this Monday morning, I am pleased to rise in the House to support this bill, which aims to establish a national health and fitness day for Canadians. This bill is sponsored by the hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country. I have always wanted to say the name of that riding because it evokes the beauty of the region.

The NDP is supporting this bill, and I support my colleague's initiatives to encourage other members to take action and become more physically fit. Unfortunately, I have not participated in his many initiatives over the years, but I should. I do my part by walking and taking the stairs when I meet with my constituents. Unfortunately, that is all the exercise I am getting right now.

The purpose of the bill is to urge and invite provinces, municipalities and community organizations to organize their own activities to emphasize the importance of healthy lifestyles and to promote health, recreation and sports organizations in their communities. Nobody would be against making it easier for Canadians to participate in healthy physical activity, avoid sedentary lifestyles and prevent chronic diseases, such as obesity. As everyone knows, this is something we have talked about a lot in recent years.

In the past 50 years, Canadians' activity levels have changed a lot. People used to walk to work and school; now they go by car or bus. That has had a tremendous impact on our lifestyles and, of course, our health. In the past, active transportation was much more common, but now people are finding fewer and fewer opportunities to get from point A to point B safely that way. Also, families are living farther and farther from their neighbourhood schools, or they decide to send their children to schools that are farther away, so they depend on cars and buses.

I would like to talk about active transportation. I lived in Ottawa for many years and I used to ride my bicycle to work. Then, in 2004,

I lived in Montreal where I also rode my bike to work. I think it has become clear recently that it is getting increasingly difficult to use this mode of transportation. Some people who chose to use active transportation and rode their bikes have died in accidents in Montreal and in many areas in Canada, including Ottawa and Toronto.

Although the bill's aim to create a national health and fitness day is laudable, I think it would be better to encourage people to make physical activity part of their daily lives, and especially to make it safer for people to get around in our cities and municipalities.

Let me use Montreal as an example. Montreal is a big city that has made considerable efforts to become more bike-friendly. However, I must admit that, like in all of our large urban centres, cars still predominate, unfortunately, and therefore it is becoming increasingly difficult for pedestrians, bicycles, cars and trucks to share the road.

More needs to be done. The federal government needs to give our cities and municipalities the means to build cities and municipalities that encourage active transportation, including walking, so that people can get around safely. Instead, however, we continue to accommodate cars more and more. All levels of government—provincial, federal and municipal—are not investing enough in public transit.

●(1125)

People keep building car-centric municipalities and neighbourhoods with no access to nearby services. Neighbourhoods keep being built according to this 1950s model.

The federal government must increase its efforts to work in partnership with the cities and provinces on building cities where there is room for active transportation, where people do not need to have a day of physical activity and where everyone can move around safely every day and be physically active. This especially affects young people because we develop healthy habits and are more physically active when we are young.

If we do not allow our children to get around safely to go to school, to hockey practice or their soccer game, and they have to get to those places by car because we have not provided enough ways to travel safely, then we are missing the boat.

A number of us met the Sport Matters Group, which connects interested members from the world of sport. According to recommendations by the Canadian Parks and Recreation Association, the federal government should include an annual commitment of \$925 million over three years, in partnership with the provinces, territories and the municipalities, to invest in an infrastructure program for projects focused on sports, physical activity and recreation.

The federal government must put its money where its mouth is and be an active partner. Talking the talk and creating a national fitness day are not enough. The government must do more to ensure that people engage in physical activity every day and get around safely by foot, by bike, or by other safe means.

In my riding, several very active community groups promote physical activity, not just for fitness, but also as a way for youth to socialize on the basketball court or soccer pitch. It is not just about having a healthy mind in a healthy body, but also about enabling these young people to work together and establish relationships.

I am referring to the Maison des jeunes de LaSalle, an organization that could use some recurrent and stable funding in order to continue implementing its excellent soccer programs for underprivileged youth. These young people attend tournaments and reap the benefits of working together. They have the opportunity to be physically active and also to prove themselves on the pitch. I support the Maison des jeunes de LaSalle.

I would also like to recognize the Académie de tennis du Sud-Ouest de Montréal, which provides opportunities to participate in sports for underprivileged children who do not benefit from sports tax credits because their parents cannot afford to buy a tennis racquet or register them for lessons. The Académie de tennis du Sud-Ouest de Montréal provides these children with the opportunity to take tennis lessons and be physically active.

• (1130)

We do agree with having a national health and fitness day. However, I believe that the federal government should do much more and make sports infrastructure accessible to everyone. Above all, it should ensure that our towns and cities can promote active transportation so that there is an opportunity every day to be active in order to stay healthy.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise to speak to this bill. I think it is a wonderful bill. The idea of having a national health and fitness day is noteworthy. I find it progressive, and I believe it is the type of thing it is most appropriate for us to be designating as a day.

Often in the chamber we hear about recognition for a special day of the year for whatever it might be, and it is always encouraging when we do that. I am especially excited about recognizing a national health and fitness day. It is long overdue. I think it will have a positive impact on Canadians. If we handle it right in terms of an overall commitment to the day, it would be a great way for people of all shapes and sizes to engage in a tangible way. This is not about focusing on just one day. It is about using that particular day to heighten awareness among the population as a whole.

In 2005, Paul Martin was the prime minister. There was a commitment of \$300 million toward the Public Health Agency of Canada. A big part of that was for looking at ways we could try to get people more active in lifestyles that would lead to more participation in indoor and outdoor activities that would improve their overall health.

What we have seen over the last number of years, whether it is the Internet, Nintendo, or the Wii system, is that there is so much out there that takes people inside buildings. They are sitting in front of computer monitors or television screens with joysticks or keyboards. People are spending too much time in front of those monitors and television screens.

Private Members' Business

There is so much more we could be doing to encourage and promote physical fitness. We need to recognize that there is a substantial cost if we do not start promoting health and fitness. We can talk about additional costs for our health care system because of chronic diseases and obesity. I am not talking about a few million dollars but rather about hundreds of millions of dollars in terms of additional health care costs.

We can also talk about this from an economic point of view in terms of the loss of productivity because of issues surrounding obesity and so forth.

The bill is worth supporting. The Liberal Party believes that we need to encourage and support activities in our communities. I will give the House a few examples, but before I do that, I would like to emphasize something that I truly believe takes place virtually in all communities.

• (1135)

We have literally hundreds of millions and up to billions of dollars of capital infrastructure in every region of our country. Is that infrastructure being adequately utilized to encourage and keep our population living longer and healthier? I would argue that the answer is no. There is so much capital infrastructure that is not being well utilized. It could be utilized much better if we provided the support and leadership necessary to capitalize on it.

Let me give a couple of examples. Every morning, in Winnipeg malls, there are groups. I go to the mall in Garden City in Winnipeg's north end or to Polo Park in Winnipeg centre. What we find is that there are seniors, every day, going to the malls, winter and summer, and what they are doing is exercising. They are walking around the malls. This is before the malls even open. It is a wonderful activity.

Every Sunday and Saturday, in gymnasiums in Winnipeg, the Filipino community organizes basketball. The leadership is from the Filipino community. They make sure that there are literally hundreds of games being played every weekend. It was just a week or so ago that I was at Garden City Collegiate, where they had several gyms full of children and adults playing basketball. A handful of volunteers put an immense amount of time into ensuring that there is an activity people can actually enjoy and participate in.

We talk about the importance of coaches and community club volunteers. How do we support them enough so that they are able to have programming and ensure that our facilities are being utilized? I would suggest that we are not doing enough to promote that. There is so much more that we could be doing.

I would like to look at the first Saturday in June. I believe that over 150 communities across Canada have gotten onside with this whole idea of a national health and fitness day. It is great to see it in one province. I am surprised that we have not seen more provinces get on board.

Maybe this piece of legislation would create a much greater sense of public awareness. It has to be more than Ottawa proclaiming a particular day. We have to get the different stakeholders involved, particularly different levels of government and the people who are responsible for capital infrastructure.

Private Members' Business

The range of activities is significant. We can talk about our beautiful lakes and trails, but let us not forget about organized activities, such as sports or yoga classes or anything else that incorporates any form of physical activity. Whether one is a senior who walks around a mall prior to it opening, or someone who plays tennis, or a youth who plays basketball, or someone doing a great deal of walking, as many of us in the House do, we need to recognize that physical activity is a good, healthy thing for us all to have as a part of our everyday lives.

• (1140)

Whatever government can do to encourage and promote that is a good thing. That is why we support the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Resuming debate.

Accordingly, I will go to the hon. member for West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country for his right of reply. The hon. member has up to five minutes.

[*Translation*]

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleagues from Winnipeg North and LaSalle—Émard for their comments.

I would like to talk about something that my colleague addressed, and that is active transportation, particularly in Quebec. There is a lot of leadership in the area of active transportation in the beautiful province of Quebec. Take for example, Pierre Lavoie, a champion who lost his son but changed his life by becoming an advocate for active lifestyles and active transportation. He created the Grand défi, in which many Quebecers participate every year. It is a major cycling challenge. I am very proud that the federal government is supporting the Grand défi in its 2014 budget.

The Union des municipalités du Québec has already proclaimed national health and fitness day. Communities such as Chelsea, Quebec, have followed suit. There are people from Quebec in the House who frequently participate in the parliamentary health initiative, for example, the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, who is always in the pool early on Thursdays, not just for the sake of his own health but also to set an example for all Canadians.

My colleague from LaSalle—Émard spoke very eloquently about cycling. I am very pleased to say that we will mark Bike Day in Canada, which we established last year, on May 11, 2015. I encourage my colleague, all members of the House and all Canadians to participate in Bike Day events. Last year, nine cities participated. My dream is that one day, every city in the country will take part in Bike Day in Canada.

I enjoy participating in the GranFondo whistler, a challenge that involves biking from Vancouver to Whistler. Several thousand people take this challenge every year. Every year, I also tour my riding by bike, from one community to another, to show that it really is possible to use a bike as a means of active transportation. Eleanor McMahon, from Toronto, champions the idea of leaving space between vehicles and bikes. I commend her for that and I hope that car drivers will be aware of cyclists. However, cyclists also have to be sure to obey the rules of the road.

In conclusion, I must respond to the comments made by the member for LaSalle—Émard.

• (1145)

[*English*]

Our government has put \$55 billion over 10 years into infrastructure. That is the biggest infrastructure investment in Canadian history and an opportunity to bring in active transportation. Also, the refundable tax credit does respond in part to the problem of poverty and getting people active.

Again, I thank my colleagues for their very fine questions.

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.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Pursuant to an order made on Tuesday, November 25, 2014, the division stands deferred until Wednesday, December 10, 2014, at the expiry of the time provided for oral questions.

SUSPENSION OF SITTING

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 11:48 a.m., the House will stand suspended until 12 noon, the usual time for government orders.

(The sitting of the House was suspended at 11:48 a.m.)

SITTING RESUMED

(The House resumed at 12 p.m.)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

● (1200)

[English]

DRUG-FREE PRISONS ACT

The House resumed from June 17 consideration of the motion that Bill C-12, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I note the enthusiasm of all members for my presentation on Bill C-12, but I am not sure that will be warranted when I finish.

I will say in advance on behalf of the official opposition that I will be supporting Bill C-12 at second reading.

The bill has a somewhat grandiose title, “The drug-free prisons act”, which, as I hope to explain in my remarks, is a long way from what the bill would accomplish.

The bill essentially confirms what is already in place. The National Parole Board, as one of the conditions for the exercise of its members' discretion, already takes into account positive results of urinalysis or a refusal to take urine tests in making its decision for parole eligibility. Despite its title, the bill would do very little, if anything, to eliminate drugs from federal prisons in Canada. That would require an investment of money and the government following some of the reports over the years by the Correctional Investigator and the federal prisons ombudsman, as I will explain. However, none of that is in the bill.

The bill simply confirms what is already in place. Members do not have to take my word for it. I went online and looked at the National Parole Board document entitled, “Decision-Making Policy Manual for Board Members”. Section 8, “Assessing Criminal, Social and Conditional Release History”, reads:

Information considered when assessing criminal, social and conditional release history includes:

...e. any documented occurrence of drug use, positive urinalysis results or failures or refusals to provide a sample while on conditional release;

The bill would do nothing but pander to the Conservative base, I suppose, and would let them have a few more talking points. However, the crisis in our prisons, which involves substance abuse, rampant gang activity and recruitment, among other things, could be addressed far more effectively by some of the things that others have pointed out and that I hope to describe today. In short, resources for rehabilitation are wanting. I can explain that just by looking at the budget of the organization and how the Conservatives have cut the budget over the years.

The Correctional Service of Canada has admitted that \$122 million of Conservative spending on interdiction tools and technology to stop drugs from entering prisons since 2008 has not

Government Orders

led to any reduction of drug use in our prisons—zero. Talk about \$122 million for naught. How come nothing has been done in light of that shocking statistic? Why have there been no policy reviews or the like? A very high percentage of our offender population abuses drugs.

I have in front of me a report by Michael Crowley who is with the National Parole Board, Ontario Region. He provides a perspective on the topic at issue. His article, “Substance Abuse—The Perspective of a National Parole Board Member”, starts thus:

It is clear that alcohol and other drug problems constitute a major problem for both incarcerated offenders and those who are on some form of conditional release. It is estimated that about 70% of offenders have substance abuse problems that are in need of treatment, and that more than 50% of their crimes are linked with substance use and abuse.

Those figures are shocking. Has the government invested in rehabilitation programs in the prison population to address that?

The answer, sadly, is no. What the Conservatives have done is to increase the prisoner population through their famous mandatory minimum sentences. The population in prisons is exploding in Canada, yet the crime rate has gone down consistently.

Mental health is part of the problem. There has been a failure to address the growing issue of prisoners with addiction, as I have mentioned, as well as those with mental illness. The figure shocks me, but in 2011 some 45% of male offenders and 69% of female offenders received a mental health care intervention.

● (1205)

Despite this staggering figure, the Conservative government has still not even asked for a report from the Correctional Service of Canada on the implementation of recommendations to improve handling of prisoners with mental illness.

How about Ashley Smith, who, members will recall, was a 19-year-old from New Brunswick who died while in custody? A coroner's report said that the CSC remains “ill-equipped” to manage female offenders who chronically injure themselves. What has been done? To my knowledge, nothing since the coroner's report. There has been no response from the government on that. If it is truly interested in dealing with the crisis in the prison population and the number of people with substance abuse problems who continue to find drugs while there, the Conservative government would not pass an irrelevant bill that simply confirms the status quo; it would actually address the problem along the lines of what the Correctional Investigator, the CSC itself, and the prisoner ombudsman have all been saying for years.

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An investment in rehabilitative programming would really start to address the problem of violence in prisons and so forth, and it would address the problem of victims when people are released into the community without the tools and then, still with mental illness problems and still with substance abuse, and go on and reoffend. That is where we could actually make a difference.

The problem of double-bunking has been brought up over and over again, and very little has been done to address that problem. Instead, we talk about “zero tolerance” for drugs, as if saying those words will somehow make it so. It certainly is not an effective policy. It does nothing to address the facts of crime and addiction that I have been trying to address in my remarks. Harm reduction measures within a public health and treatment orientation would be far more promising. That is what the Correctional Investigator said in his annual report of 2011-2012 at page 17. Those are recommendations by those who actually know whereof they speak.

The wait-list for substance abuse programming, for example, in our prisons is shocking. According to the CSC data warehouse, the number of offenders wait-listed to attend substance abuse programming as of a year ago, as of November 13, 2013, which does not even include the Pacific and Atlantic regions, is almost 2,000. It is estimated there are probably about 2,400 now.

According to the report of the Office of the Correction Investigator, close to two-thirds of offenders were under the influence of some intoxicant when they committed the offence that led to their incarceration, and four out of five offenders arrive at a federal institution with a past history of substance abuse. What has been done? The Conservatives, of course, have cut the budget for substance abuse programming. According to the Office of the Correctional Investigator, the CSC budget for substance abuse programming fell from \$11 million in 2008-09 to \$9 million in 2010-11, at the same time as the prisoner population was increased.

The Globe and Mail has done excellent service on another issue in drawing the problem of solitary confinement to Canadians' attention. I was not aware of this, but Canada seems to be leading the way in solitary confinement. Even the United States, with its practices in this area, has decreased the number of people and the length of time in solitary confinement.

The Globe and Mail told the story this weekend of Edward Christopher Snowshoe of Fort McPherson, who suffered from mental health issues. He spent three years in a maximum security prison in Edmonton and tried suicide four times. He was 24 when he hanged himself in a two- by three-metre isolation cell in 2010. He had spent 162 consecutive days in solitary confinement.

This man had mental health issues, yet nothing was done. Putting him in solitary confinement, which *The Globe and Mail* refers to as apparently a prison management system, was all that was done. Howard Sapers, who was the ombudsman for federal prisons, has been extraordinarily critical of this agency and how it deals with mental health issues.

Are members aware that the suicide rate in the federal prison population is seven times that of the Canadian population, and that there is no cap on solitary confinement? The courts have said there should be a 60-day cap.

There is no response to the Ashley Smith episode. The bill, in summary, will do nothing to address these deficiencies. It is simply pandering to the Conservative base for absolutely no benefit.

• (1210)

Mr. Adam Vaughan (Trinity—Spadina, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I noted with interest the issue of solitary confinement. I am sure we are all aware of the extraordinary psychological damage this does to prisoners, who are expected to be returned not just to the general prison population but to society at some point.

I was wondering if the member could tell us more about his concerns over a prison system that seems more intent on punishment than on reform and more intent on looking strong than on reforming and rehabilitating. It is a prison system that puts prisoners in harm's way, especially in light of the suicide figures that were quoted.

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, I agree with my colleague from Trinity—Spadina on this issue of solitary confinement. If the government really wanted to do something about what is happening in our prison population, it could join with Mr. Howard Sapers, the ombudsman for federal prisoners, and do something.

I was shocked to discover that not only do seven times as many people commit suicide in prison than in the general population, but also that rather than having a rehabilitation system, which is what the rhetoric of the CSC would have us believe exists, we have what *The Globe and Mail*, in its editorial of December 5, refers to as the “flagrant overuse of solitary confinement – a punitive measure so counter-productive that even the incarceration-crazy United States is putting an end to it – risks undermining the good work the CSC does.” It needs the budget and the tools to address this crisis. It needs to deal with intake, substance abuse, and mental illness. None of that seems to be happening in this bill whatsoever.

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wonder if my hon. colleague can give his opinion on the link between acts like solitary confinement and the use of drugs in terms of our better understanding as we move along. Drugs are not always a choice but rather a way in which people hide from whatever pain they are suffering. In the case of people who are going through solitary confinement, how does this help them find a way off of drugs?

Government Orders

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his insight. I honestly think that solitary confinement contributes nothing. It is unethical to use it simply as a management tool for overcrowded prisons. A causal link needs to be shown that putting people into solitary confinement to address problems of mental health or substance abuse would make a difference, but there is no such evidence. I have with me reports written for the *Canadian Journal of Public Health* by Perry Kendall, who is the former head of public health for the Province of British Columbia, which suggest that there is no such evidence.

In other words, these people come in lonely, and two-thirds of them are under the influence of a drug or intoxicant. Most of whom are confined in the prison population, and their behaviour is not changed while they are in prison. It appears that putting them in solitary confinement only exacerbates the problem and does nothing to treat the prisoner. If we are serious about rehabilitation, we should see that solitary confinement is only a management tool and one that we are using far more than our colleagues in other parts of the modern civilized world.

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Northwest Territories, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I too was troubled by the article in *The Globe and Mail* about Edward Snowshoe. In many ways we could look at putting mentally ill people in solitary confinement as torture, and by doing so we are engaging in an act that is reprehensible and should not be part of a civilized society. What does my colleague think about that?

• (1215)

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, the compassion of my colleague from the Northwest Territories for people like Mr. Snowshoe is well known.

The answer to the question is that it does very little. When *The Globe and Mail* reached out to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness on this issue, he was not available. However, an email response stated that the government's tough-on-crime agenda amounts to "strong action...to keep our streets and communities safe." How does the suicide of Mr. Snowshoe in solitary confinement achieve that goal?

The government talks about victims of crime all the time. How does this assist victims of crime? Where are the rehabilitation expenditures in the department? For the Conservatives, it seems that consideration is secondary to looking good to their base by saying that they getting tough on crime. They even had the audacity to title Bill C-12 as a "drug-free prisons" law. That is nonsense. We know that is not the case. All it does is confirm a power that has long been available to the National Parole Board.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-12, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act. This bill is designed to eliminate drugs in prisons. It makes it clear that the Parole Board of Canada may use positive results from urine tests or refusals to take urine tests for drugs in making its decisions on parole eligibility.

We will support this bill, since it gives clear legal authority to an existing practice of the Parole Board of Canada, which we already support. The NDP has been steadfast in our support for measures that will make our prisons safer, while the Conservative government

has ignored recommendations from corrections staff and the Correctional Investigator that would decrease violence in our prisons. Since that is our main concern, I think that the only good way to reduce crime, violence and drug use is to invest in human resources, which is what I will demonstrate. I think this is very important, since the problems and solutions can be found in the prisons themselves. All we have to do is listen to corrections staff to better understand what we can do to eventually improve the situation, because that is truly what we want.

The title of Bill C-12 is misleading as this bill will do little to eliminate all drugs from our federal prison system. The government is actually making our prisons less safe by cutting funding to correctional programming, such as substance abuse treatment, and increasing the use of double-bunking, which leads to more violence.

Our priority should be ensuring community safety by preparing ex-offenders to reintegrate into society and making them less likely to reoffend. I still think that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure and that we need to consider all of the scenarios. That requires human resources.

I recently met with staff of the Aumônerie communautaire de Québec, a community organization that promotes the social reintegration of those with a criminal record. The chaplaincy's mission is to support offenders, and their loved ones, as they reintegrate into society. It is a difficult situation for everyone. The organization wants to help them become active members of society who obey the law. The people at the Aumônerie communautaire de Québec are doing a great job. We should continue to support these organizations, which all too often lack resources.

Here is a very good example. People might not know this, but in Quebec City, from 7 to 9 in the morning, there are not a lot of places where people can go to have a cup of coffee and a chat with others who can really be excellent resources. You cannot put a price on that because when people turn to those resources to talk and unwind, they can avoid committing more crimes and make better use of their time. That benefits society as a whole. That is why I am so grateful to the Aumônerie communautaire de Québec, which does unique and exceptional work that we have to support at all costs.

According to Correctional Service Canada, the \$122 million that the Conservatives have spent since 2008 to keep drugs out of prisons has not reduced drug use behind bars. A 2012 study by Public Safety Canada reveals that drug-free prisons are not a realistic possibility. Even so, the Conservative government, wedded to its unfounded, ideological stance, continues to invest money in pursuit of an unrealistic, utopian goal for the simple reason that it wants to please its base, and that is just deplorable.

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I have to say there has been a very unfortunate side effect of this emphasis on interdiction, and that is that it has interfered with family visits. We know that family support is crucial for social reintegration, especially for those with addictions.

● (1220)

Therefore, spending the \$122 million wasted money, interfered with family visits and hurt rehabilitation programs.

However, such an approach is very consistent with the Conservative policy on drugs. Indeed, the Conservatives' misguided approach to public safety has resulted in more prisoners with mental illness in our prison system. A very high percentage of the offender population is struggling with mental illness. At the same time, the budget allocated for core correctional programs, such as drug treatment, has been reduced, and the Conservative government has even closed treatment centres for inmates with serious mental health disorders. The Conservatives have failed to address the growing problem of prisoners with addiction and mental illness. In 2011 for example, 69% of female offenders and 45% of male offenders received a mental health care intervention. That speaks volumes about the federal correctional system, and that is what we should be focusing on here. Once again, this of course comes back to the issue of human resources.

We do know from testimony to the House of Commons over the past 10 years that federal offenders often have to contend with long waiting lists to access core correctional programming that includes addiction treatment. We also know that the conditional release of an offender is regularly delayed due to a lack of capacity to provide timely programs. In seven institutions surveyed in February 2012, only 12.5% of offenders were enrolled in a core correctional program, while 35% were on the waiting lists to access these programs. This results in offenders simply being released after their time is served, with little or no treatment, and this leaves them more likely to reoffend.

This should signal a red alert. Prison should be just a short stint in a person's life, not a final destination with no way out. The most important thing is that once a person gets to prison and has served his full sentence, he must be welcomed back in society and be able to integrate fully into it and become a hard-working, active member of the community. That is what we really want. We want the offender to be able to integrate into society, but he needs to be given the tools to do so. As I said, we must also ensure that he is in optimal health so that he is able to do so. The data we have show that we need to be more concerned about that and perhaps change our approach in order to be more effective.

The Correctional Investigator has stated in numerous reports that the corrections system risks unintended consequences when simplistic solutions are applied to the complex issue of drugs in prisons. He has suggested measures such as proper assessment of prisoners at intake into correctional programs to identify addiction problems and provide better access to rehabilitation programs as ways of reducing drugs and gang activity in prison.

As I mentioned, making prisons drug-free is, at best, a legitimate aspiration and, at worst, just a political slogan. It simply is not a policy. We cannot have a policy to eliminate drugs from prisons. We must tackle the problems of addiction and mental health in prisons.

Once again, coming back to our party's real policies, and not the scare tactics the Conservatives like to use, the NDP has always been steadfast in our support for measures that will make our prisons safer. The Conservatives, on the contrary, have ignored recommendations from corrections staff—who are the experts—the corrections unions and the Correctional Investigator that were aimed at decreasing violence, gang activity and drug use in our prisons.

The NDP is determined to create safer communities by providing treatment and rehabilitation programs for inmates that will tackle the problem of drugs and gangs in our prisons and better prepare inmates for their release into society.

● (1225)

There will be less crime, less harm and fewer victims.

The Conservatives' public safety policies are not effective. Inmates who are released find themselves in the same circumstances as before and thus our streets are even less safe.

We have to think carefully and adopt much more significant measures than the ones being brought forward, because we have a serious problem and a critical lack of resources. We have to come up with a much more serious approach.

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened carefully to the speech given by my colleague from Québec. She raised some interesting points about how the bill contains some rather unrealistic measures. Since the Reagan years and the 1980s, it does not seem as though the zero tolerance policy has been working.

Today, there are almost 2,000 offenders in our prisons—2,400 if we count those who are on the waiting list to attend a substance abuse program. That is why I believe that the government is not investing enough in programs to help offenders overcome their addictions. Approximately four out of five offenders arrive at a federal institution with a past history of substance abuse. There is therefore a great need, and services are insufficient to meet it.

Would the member care to comment on that?

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his remarks.

I am a very practical MP and I am in close contact with community organizations that do exceptional work with very few resources. They need more resources so that they can do more.

Quebec City has many shelters, including the YMCA, the Salvation Army, Maison de Lauberivière, the Aumônerie communautaire de Québec or Maison Revivre. Many homeless people have mental health issues. Many of them will eventually get fed up, commit a wrongful act and end up in prison.

Government Orders

We are living in a society where we need to ask ourselves how we can improve the situation in the face of such distress. Our objective is not to fill our prisons. That costs a lot of money and does not allow those individuals to participate in the community. Sending people to prison is not good for anyone.

Prisons are very short on staff to help inmates. They need people such as chaplains and psychologists to listen to inmates, guide them and help them, slowly but surely, recover from their addictions so that they can integrate into the community and be good citizens.

This requires resources, not just on the ground, but also in prisons. That is something we should consider.

• (1230)

Mr. Jonathan Tremblay (Montmorency—Charlevoix—Haute-Côte-Nord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Québec for her very enlightening speech on the Conservative government's choices.

The previous question was about sending people to prison and not allocating any resources to provide the basic services they need.

In Canada, the government has been passing so-called tough-on-crime bills to send more people to prison. The provinces often end up footing the bill, and there are now more people in provincial prisons.

I do not know what my colleague thinks about this, but the government makes decisions without consulting the provinces, although that is a very important part of every decision, and without regard for who will be footing the bill.

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, it is one thing to make laws and do everything possible to have them enforced so that every little crime in Canada is punished. I understand that, but the process costs money and inevitably requires more resources.

First, we need to determine what kind of society we want. I think that far too often the provinces are left to foot the bill.

I think we need to be proactive with the issue and understand what our young people are going through, so that we can help them with clearly defined resources and prevent them from breaking the law. If we hope to identify mental health issues, we need to invest the resources. This could help prevent crime and reduce the likelihood of people going to prison. We need to address this problem proactively.

When someone is incarcerated, we need to look at his or her case and provide adequate resources. Right now, all I see are punitive laws, more people in prison and fewer resources. These people will commit the same crimes if they do not receive help in prison, and this will end up costing us a lot of money in court and prison costs.

We have to be consistent and look at everything in context.

[*English*]

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-12, the optimistically titled drug-free prisons act.

Bill C-12 would amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act to require parole boards to cancel day parole or full parole if an offender failed a drug test or refused to provide a urine sample and if the board then considered that the criteria for granting parole were no

longer met. As the law currently establishes, urine samples may be demanded on reasonable grounds as part of a random selection or as a prescribed requirement of a particular program, such as a substance abuse treatment program.

Bill C-12 would also clarify that conditions of parole or other forms of release may include conditions relating to an offender's use of drugs or alcohol. The imposition of such conditions would explicitly include cases where drug or alcohol use had been a factor in the offender's criminal behaviour.

The Liberals will be recommending that this bill go to committee for further study. However, I would like to reiterate the criticisms that my colleague, the hon. member for Malpeque, levelled at this bill over a year ago.

First, we would all like to see drug-free prisons, yet Bill C-12 takes an exclusively punitive approach to substance abuse in Canada's correctional facilities. Does anyone think this will be effective?

In his 2011-12 annual report, Howard Sapers, the Correctional Investigator of Canada, made the following observation:

A "zerotolerance" stance to drugs in prison, while perhaps serving as an effective deterrent posted at the entry point of a penitentiary, simply does not accord with the facts of crime and addiction in Canada or elsewhere in the world. Harm reduction measures within a public health and treatment orientation offer a far more promising, cost-effective and sustainable approach to reducing subsequent crime and victimization.

Mr. Sapers' report specifically stated:

—that a comprehensive and integrated drug strategy should include a balance of measures — prevention, treatment, harm reduction and interdiction.

In 2012, the Conservative government re-appointed Mr. Sapers, giving him his third consecutive term. Accordingly, one might be tempted to think that the government would take the advice of its chosen adviser. After all, Mr. Sapers' recommendations were the product of careful and politically impartial analysis. Efficacy was the sole motivator.

Why does the Conservative government not listen to the highly qualified individuals who have been hired to give good advice and who are motivated solely by the desire to give good advice?

When Privacy Commissioner Daniel Therrien suggested splitting Bill C-13 into two bills, the government ignored him. When Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin of the Supreme Court tried to warn the government about its legal problem with appointments from the Federal Court, the government ignored her. We all remember that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Justice even went so far as to slander the Chief Justice for trying to save them from themselves. This is a worrying trend, although I do not expect the government to take my advice, either.

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In this instance, ignoring the Correctional Investigator is stunning, or as my Newfoundland colleagues may say, “stunned”. Howard Sapers was vice-chairperson for the Prairie Region with the Parole Board of Canada, director of the Crime Prevention Investment Fund at the National Crime Prevention Centre and executive director of the John Howard Society of Alberta. He served two terms as an elected member of the Alberta legislative assembly, including as leader of the official opposition. He is also an adjunct professor School of Criminology at Simon Fraser University, and he has served as president of the Canadian Criminal Justice Association. That is whose advice the government is ignoring.

Instead of taking that advice, the government is opting for a purely punitive strategy. Yes, the government's only solution to drug use in prisons is to keep more people in prisons for longer periods of time. As Kyle Kirkup wrote in the *The Globe and Mail*, the government's thinking on criminal justice is summed up by the slogan “Got a complex social issue? There's a prison for that.”

I suppose this should come as no surprise. Bill C-12 is business as usual for the Conservatives. It is strong on rhetoric and weak on policy.

• (1235)

The government consistently prioritizes optics over substance, Orwellian sound bites over logic and it does Canadians a great disservice. We see it with mandatory minimums. We see it with the failure to use evidence to formulate public policy. In its eagerness to appear tough on crime, the government goes soft on thinking.

[*Translation*]

Last year, Mr. Sapers shared some deeply troubling statistics with Canadians. His report indicated that Canada's prison population is now at its highest level ever, even though the crime rate has been decreasing over the past two decades.

About three out of four offenders in federal penitentiaries are considered to have addictions, and a very high percentage of those addicts also have mental health issues. Given the context, this new bill's punitive approach is clearly unjustified.

Further, close to a quarter of all inmates are aboriginal, although aboriginal people make up only 4% of Canada's population. In the past decade, the number of aboriginal women in prison has increased by 112%. Aboriginal inmates are also subject to use-of-force interventions and incur a disproportionate number of institutional disciplinary measures. In addition, aboriginal inmates are typically released later in their sentences—80% by statutory release—and are less likely to be granted day parole or full parole.

Still, here we have a bill that does nothing to address the historical injustice and resultant social problems that aboriginal people are grappling with today. Instead, this bill would effectively lock up aboriginal inmates struggling with addictions for longer periods of time.

• (1240)

[*English*]

The issues plaguing aboriginal communities are reported in the newspaper, and we know those are available in this chamber.

Therefore, ask, when is the government going to address the problems facing aboriginal communities?

I am disappointed by the government's approach, but I am not surprised. Just a couple of weeks ago we saw what the government did with Bill C-583, the bill from the member for Yukon, that would have made fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, or FASD, a mitigating factor in sentencing. Of course, FASD disproportionately affects aboriginal and northern communities. Bill C-583 was a bill that both the Liberals and the New Democrats were ready to support, yet the member for Yukon agreed to turn the bill into a study, killing his own proposal. One could reasonably infer that the government pressured the member to do this rather than risk being seen—Heaven forbid—as soft on persons with fetal alcohol spectrum disorder. However, I digress.

Speaking of this bill, we need to consider what the Correctional Investigator said in his 2013-14 report. Specifically, he was critical of the government's continued refusal to develop a comprehensive program. I emphasize the word “comprehensive”. To respond to continued drug use in penitentiaries, he said:

Interdiction and suppression in the absence of a more comprehensive range of treatment, prevention and harm reduction measures will not eliminate the demand (or supply) of contraband drugs or alcohol.

Mr. Sapers also criticized how the government had undermined a key correctional services program on addiction, specifically, its 10% funding cut to the prison methadone program. Mr. Sapers said:

I question the appropriateness of reducing investment in a program that delivers sound public policy benefits from both a health and public safety standpoint.

I could not say it better, and I would strongly urge the government to heed the advice of its chosen advisers by developing a more comprehensive strategy than what this punitive bill represents.

Again, Mr. Sapers set out what that strategy would look like. It would involve an integrated link between interdiction and prevention, treatment and harm reduction. It would involve a comprehensive public reporting mechanism and would involve a well defined evaluation, review and performance plan to ensure efficacy.

Finally, when the bill goes to committee, I would especially urge the government to take seriously any constructive proposals for amendments that emerge. We currently have a punitive bill that would not solve the drug problem in Canada's prisons and that would exacerbate aboriginal incarceration rates. Frankly, we need to do better, and we can do better.

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Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to set the record straight. In fact, there are programs in place in prisons to deal with addiction and drug problems because of this government. I think it would be hard to argue, even for members opposite, that serious crime in Canada has gone down since we have put in our policies.

What we are doing, which I think Canadians recognize, is ending the revolving door of the Liberal justice system. We are ensuring that people who commit serious crimes actually stay in jail, receive the rehabilitation they require and then are released when it is appropriate. However, we will not release someone back into society that has a serious drug problem.

The purpose of the bill is to ensure that if someone has illegally accessed drugs and has tested positive, that person will not be paroled back into society. Does the member agree that is an important principle, or does he feel that someone who has possibly been in jail because of crimes connected to serious drug use or organized crime should be released when still using?

Mr. Sean Casey: Mr. Speaker, I agree it is an important principle. However, the approach of the government is this. When the only thing one has in one's tool kit is a sledgehammer, everything starts to look like a rock. While it is an important principle, it is more complex than locking people up and throwing away the key. That is the problem.

It is absolutely the case that we need to reduce the amount of drugs in prisons, but this is a nuance problem and requires a comprehensive approach. As the Correctional Investigator has said, simply locking people up and throwing away the key, which seems to be the answer for everything in the government, is not working, and it will not work. It is high time the government listened to the advice of the good people it has hired to give it impartial advice.

• (1245)

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened attentively to my colleague's speech and I want to ask him a question. I believe he is one of the members who sits on the justice committee. I want to ask him about what is not already in place. What is the added value that this bill would bring about, or is it, as usual, a bit of window dressing from the government?

When I look at the legislative summary of the bill, there are already a lot of conditions in place that would address the concerns. He has mentioned the title of the bill. Would the bill really change anything significantly, or, again, is it just window dressing?

Mr. Sean Casey: Mr. Speaker, that is an entirely fair question. Drug testing is already available to the authorities under multiple circumstances, including random drug testing and drug testing where there is reasonable cause to demand one. Drug testing in the case of compliance with a probation order or the terms of release include in them conditions with respect to drug and alcohol use. Therefore, all those things are presently in effect.

This bill calls for drug testing on someone after he or she has been approved for release or parole without the necessary governor or reasonable and probable grounds to demand such a test. It would add one more instance in which drug testing could be made available.

However, the member has an entirely fair point that drug testing within the correctional system is already quite prevalent.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise to speak to Bill C-12. I will refrain from repeating the title, so as not to embarrass the members across the aisle, given their ridiculous attempt to appeal to their base for campaign cash. The truth is that there is absolutely no connection between the bill's title and its objective. This is not to say that the NDP does not support the bill, for we would like to see it go the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security for further study. I wish the Conservative Party would stop treating the House of Commons of Canada like a PR firm. First of all, \$750 million has been spent over the years on government advertising, sometimes for legislation that has not even passed yet and now for embarrassingly amateur marketing ploys for a simple bill.

Come on. We all need to behave like adults.

Before speaking further to the major differences between the philosophy of the NDP on prevention and rehabilitation and that of the Conservative Party on repression, I would like to sincerely thank my colleagues from Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca and Alfred-Pellan for their excellent work on public safety files. I could not be more proud of these two individuals, who devote so much of their talent, energy and intellect to coming up with intelligent, fact-based public policy that takes into account recommendations by experts in the field.

The NDP certainly does not have all the answers, but it knows how to listen to the experts in various areas under federal jurisdiction. That way, we end up with public policies that will generally not end up before the courts, which is the Conservatives' way.

I would like to begin by pointing out the incongruity of the title of the bill: the "drug-free prisons act". This is not a government policy. It seems more like a legitimate aspiration that we all share as parliamentarians, but it is not public policy.

The real problem is addiction in prisons. Did members know that 80% of those who go to a federal penitentiary have drug or alcohol problems? That is huge.

Instead of listening to the many recommendations made by the 20 or so witnesses who appeared before the Standing Committee on Public Safety when it was studying alcohol and drug use in federal penitentiaries, the government is just formalizing an existing practice of the Parole Board of Canada. Nothing more, nothing less. Its only plan is to give the bill a catchy title worthy of a feature film featuring the late, great actor and comedian, Leslie Nielsen. Then the young, zealous staffers in the Prime Minister's Office will ask the Conservative Party base for donations because the Conservatives are such good public administrators.

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I can say three things about Bill C-12. Once again, as is the case with the work of the Standing Committee on Canadian Heritage and several House of Commons committees, I see that the party in power does not value committee work and that the efforts made by parliamentarians every day in these committees are brusquely rejected out of hand.

The Correctional Investigator has stated in numerous reports that the corrections system risks unintended consequences when simplistic solutions are applied to the complex issue of drugs in prisons. Bill C-12 is limited in scope and is only a tiny step in the marathon that will lead to a reduction in addiction problems in prisons.

Frankly, I have a hard time believing that the member for Lévis—Bellechasse and Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness is not the slightest bit embarrassed to participate in this public relations scheme that does not in any way constitute effective public policy.

Strangely enough, the government has not made any mention of the fact that the Correctional Service of Canada has admitted that the \$122 million dollars the Conservatives have spent since 2008 on interdiction tools and technology to stop drugs from entering prisons has not led to any reduction in drug use in prisons. None. Oops. It has not reduced the use of drugs in prisons. Oops. It is not that difficult to come up with public policy that makes sense. The Correctional Investigator has suggested measures such as proper assessment of prisoners at intake into correctional programs in order to identify their addiction problems and give them better access to rehabilitation programs. This would help to reduce drugs and gang activity in prison.

The following is a quote from the Correctional Investigator's annual report:

A "zero-tolerance" stance to drugs in prison [is an aspiration rather than an effective policy. It] simply does not accord with the facts of crime and addiction in Canada or elsewhere in the world. Harm reduction measures within a public health and treatment orientation offer a far more promising, cost-effective and sustainable approach to reducing subsequent crime and victimization.

● (1250)

It seems to me that it is rather easy to ignore an annual report with a quote like that one and then to introduce a weak bill like Bill C-12.

The John Howard Society also supports Bill C-12 and the Parole Board of Canada's discretion on parole eligibility. It believes that this bill will not eliminate drugs from prisons and that this is just a tactic by the Conservatives to ignore some of the real issues in prison, such as mental illness, double-bunking, and inmate self-injury and suicide.

I want to quickly go over some of the government's contradictory public safety policies. If the Conservative government were serious about combatting drug addiction in our prisons, it would not have cut the budgets of correctional programs such as substance abuse programs, for example. It would certainly not have increased double-bunking. The government is just not able to walk the talk when it comes to public safety.

The Correctional Service of Canada budget cut announced in 2012 was \$295 million—10%—over two years. Breaking the

numbers down, we see that between 2% and 2.7% of its budget is allocated to core correctional programs, including substance abuse programs. Because of the cuts, that core operating budget will shrink too.

According to the Office of the Correctional Investigator, CSC's budget for substance abuse programming fell from \$11 million in 2008-09 to \$9 million in 2010-11. It is clear to me that these legislative measures, like mandatory minimum sentences, are increasing the prison population even as the government is shutting down certain correctional institutions. We are currently seeing an unprecedented spike in Canada's prison population.

What does all of this add up to? Correctional Service Canada has normalized double-bunking. In December 2012, the prairies were double-bunking at 21%, Ontario at 16% and now Quebec at 10%.

Correctional staff and the Correctional Investigator have repeatedly stated that this practice leads to increased violence and gang activity. The Conservative government's record is not improving; ultimately, inmates are leaving prison without treatment and are more likely to become involved in their previous criminal activities.

The figures support that hypothesis. According to the Correctional Service of Canada data warehouse, the number of offenders waitlisted to attend substance abuse programming as of November 13, 2013—excluding the Pacific and Atlantic regions—is 1,962, meaning that there are likely far more than 2,000 on wait lists now.

We should keep in mind that there are approximately 15,000 inmates in federal prisons. That means there are a lot of people on the waiting list. What it comes down to is that there is no vision and, more importantly, these weak measures are being implemented simply to fill the Conservative Party's coffers.

In contrast, the NDP has a common-sense proposal. Unlike the repressive logic of the party opposite, the NDP is determined to make communities safer with treatment and rehabilitation programs for inmates. As a result, we will be able to better address the drug and gang problems in our prisons. Moreover, inmates will be better prepared to be released into the community.

We also want to protect the safety of correctional staff by eliminating the practice of double-bunking and making sure that resources are put into treatment for offenders with addictions and mental illnesses. The best way to address addiction problems in our prisons is by treating those addictions and not by wasting \$122 million on sniffer dogs and technologies that have proven ineffective.

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If Bill C-12, with its ridiculous title, is the only thing this government and its pals in the Prime Minister's Office plan to do to fight drugs in our prisons, then clearly, they are not smoking the same cigarettes I am.

•(1255)

[*English*]

Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to clarify the record again, the NDP member talks about prison populations exploding, and that is in fact not the case.

That was predicted by many in the media and by the NDP opposition party, and it is absolutely not the case. Again, only the NDP would think it is bad thing that someone who commits a crime actually ends up in jail.

On this side of the House, we believe that if someone commits a serious crime against a person, society, or communities, they should serve appropriate sentences. Our policies are working. Serious crime rates in Canada are down.

I want to ask the member the same question that I asked the Liberal member who spoke previously. The member from the NDP spoke about it, indicating that many who are serving serious time in jail right now are people with addiction and alcohol problems. If this is the case, and people are still getting drugs and alcohol in the prison system, should they be released on parole if they have serious drug or other illicit substances in their blood?

I am asking the member that question because on this side of the House we do not think that is a good idea, especially considering that many of the crimes were committed in conjunction with drug and alcohol problems.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, in response to my colleague across the aisle, I will try to avoid lapsing into the old partisan ways that usually dominate this debate here.

This tendency to suggest that we do not take crime seriously and that we do not want to put people who commit crime in prison is just so low. It reeks of cheap, pathetic partisan politics.

I would like to point out something that simply does not make sense. I am referring to a front page showing a weapon that has been made easily available to people. It is shameful. This does not please the Conservatives' little friends, the ones who fund the party.

•(1300)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on the point from correctional support staff because they often get overlooked when we are dealing with legislation of this nature. The government approaches legislation of this sort with a simplistic attitude, that not having alcohol or drugs in any form whatsoever within our prisons would cure the problems.

I have had the opportunity to have discussions with correctional officers in the past, and they want to have as much harmony as possible within the cellblocks and the ranges because not only is it better for the prisoners, but it is also a safer environment for them.

Does the member believe that the passage of this legislation would help to facilitate a safer working environment for correctional staff?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question.

Obviously, we are recommending that this bill be studied in committee because these measures have merit. The fancy titles for these measures, however, do not, because although the measures are certainly a good addition, they do not really address the problem.

The Conservatives add these catchy titles to appeal to their law and order supporters. Clearly, there is no real commitment here.

[*English*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I would remind hon. members that in the course of debate it is usually frowned upon to use props, if they are used in that manner. Members will use documents from time to time and refer to them, but when something is used as a prop to support an argument, that is something that is well to avoid.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was listening to my colleague and especially to the parliamentary secretary across the way.

I sometimes get the impression that the government takes this country for the set of a John Wayne movie, where there are good guys and bad guys. Unfortunately, there are rarely any grey areas in this government, but reality is full of grey areas.

I heard my colleague's speech. When I think of the outstanding work he is doing to save Radio-Canada, I feel like taking the Conservatives, pulling them out of their John Wayne world, and putting them directly into a world that helps us better understand the federal prison setting, namely the excellent show *Unité 9*. This show helps us understand how important it is to have human resources to better serve inmates and especially to ensure that they do not end up back at square one, that they make progress and become better citizens.

What does my colleague think about that?

Mr. Pierre Nantel: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague from Québec for her question.

She is quite right in saying that some shows can provide insight into the reality of law enforcement and peace officers at Correctional Service Canada. Their work is extremely difficult and full of challenges, and they constantly face danger.

It is sad to see that we are again going to get caught up in partisanship. Christmas is approaching. I hope that we will hear more than just the partisan messages the Conservatives want to see in their householders.

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Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act. This title clearly spells out the bill's objective. However, as usual, the Conservatives have added a completely misleading and disingenuous title: the "drug-free prisons act". Some Canadians may not believe it, but it seems that this is a scourge in Canadian prisons.

I would first like to remind members that the official opposition, the NDP, and I have three main objectives when it comes to this type of bill.

First, we must ensure that correctional staff have a safe workplace. Second, we also want to build safer communities for all Canadians through treatment and rehabilitation programs for inmates. Third, we want to ensure that victims have the resources they need to get their lives back on track.

Those are the NDP's three major messages for these three groups.

Right now, under the Corrections and Conditional Release Act and regulations, urine samples can be collected. This must always be done in accordance with the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, but this practice is already in place in order to prevent drug use in prisons. When it comes time for an inmate to be released, he must meet certain criteria so that he does not reoffend and he demonstrates that he wants to change.

There are conditions for collecting urine samples. First, there must be reasonable grounds since inmates' rights must still be protected. Random checks can be done under certain conditions.

Urinalysis can be required for participation in activities. If an inmate tests positive for drugs, he can either be prohibited from participating in certain activities or he can enrol in a drug treatment program. What is more, controls are in place to verify whether inmates are complying with conditions to abstain from consuming drugs or alcohol, for example.

There is already a system in place, which is why I was questioning the usefulness of this bill. There should be a good reason to introduce a bill in the House of Commons. We have to wonder whether this bill truly adds anything to this issue or whether it is simply an electioneering tactic to call the bill the "drug-free prisons act".

The amendment made by this bill makes it clear that the Parole Board of Canada has the power to impose a condition regarding the use of drugs or alcohol by stating that the conditions may pertain to the offender's use of drugs or alcohol, including in cases when that use has been identified as a risk factor in the offender's criminal behaviour. However, this does not add much in reality.

● (1305)

I would like to talk about how we can prevent drug use. We can crack down on drugs and controls can be implemented. That is important. As I mentioned, we want to ensure that corrections staff and inmates are safe. We also want inmates to have the chance to rehabilitate.

Some people who committed crimes may have been addicts. Once they are imprisoned, they should have access to drug treatment

programs. In 2008 and 2009, the government spent \$11 million on drug treatment programs in jails. In 2010 and 2011, that figure dropped to \$9 million, which shows that this government does not want to make our prisons safer or drug-free.

The ombudsman also put out a troubling, timely and appropriate report. I would like to share a quote from it. The report followed some troubling cases, including the suicides of Mr. Snowshoe in the Northwest Territories and a young woman, Ms. Smith. They had been imprisoned in absolutely inhumane conditions. They had been put in solitary confinement.

● (1310)

[*English*]

I would like to quote an article in today's *Globe and Mail*:

One out of every four inmates who cycled through federal penitentiaries last year spent some time in solitary confinement, an extreme form of incarceration that is undermining efforts to rehabilitate offenders, Canada's prison watchdog says.

Segregating a man or woman from the rest of the population is supposed to be used sparingly as a last resort, Howard Sapers, the Ombudsman for federal prisoners, said in an interview on Sunday. But the agency that runs Canada's 47 federal prisons and community corrections centres is increasingly turning to solitary confinement to manage institutions that are crowded and lack sufficient resources to deal with high-needs inmates....

"It's become a default population-management strategy,"....

[*Translation*]

It is a tragedy. Cells are overcrowded, creating explosive situations in Canadian prisons. Canada is a G7 country, a developed country. Successive Conservative government bills have imposed mandatory minimum sentences, eliminated rehabilitation programs and ensured that community crime prevention programs are underfunded. Community groups are fighting to keep youth from joining gangs. All of that is being underfunded.

I am somewhat perplexed about this bill, which, in my opinion, does not add much to what is already in place. However, it gives me the opportunity to point out the country's overwhelming need in terms of crime prevention and rehabilitation in particular.

Mr. Pierre Nantel (Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher, NDP): Madam Speaker, the holidays are approaching, so it would be good for Canadians to see that we are not always engaged in partisan fighting here in the House. This bill offers few improvements, but it is a positive bill. I would like to ask my colleague if she is hopeful that in committee we will be able to build on what this bill has to offer.

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Longueuil—Pierre-Boucher for his question. I will leave it to our very capable critics to do the research and propose amendments, if need be.

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I believe that there will be plenty of witnesses from civil society who will testify about the difficulties they encounter in Canadian prisons, including overcrowding and lack of resources. They will also be able to recount how dangerous this is. This bill impedes prevention and rehabilitation.

•(1315)

[English]

Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Madam Speaker, I thank the hon. member across the way for her speech. However, as I listened to it, I kept hearing the phrase, “It is a tragedy”. It is a tragedy about the prison population. It is a tragedy over double-bunking. It is a tragedy over confinement. I wish the NDP opposition member would actually show that same empathy when it comes to the real victims of crime, the same victims of the individuals who are actually incarcerated in jail because of the crimes they committed.

The question I would ask the member is this: If someone is convicted of a crime, and other members in the house tied that to the fact that many have addiction and alcohol problems, and that individual is still accessing illegal drugs in prison and has tested positive to an illegal substance in his or her system, does the member feel that the individual should be released on parole or kept in jail, because they committed another crime? Is that actually a tragedy as well?

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc: Madam Speaker, I thank the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness for the question.

At no time in my speech did I ever say that using illegal drugs, whether inside or outside of prison, is a good thing. However, I do not want to see any more victims in Canada, which is why I believe that strong rehabilitation and addiction programs will help keep communities safer and serve as a way to prevent future crimes. That should be our objective.

In Canada, we want to ensure that there are no victims of crime in general, of violent crime, of crime motivated by addictions or any other kind of crime. I do not disagree with the Conservatives regarding the need for strong monitoring programs to prevent illegal drugs from entering our prisons. This absolutely must be controlled and we have to make sure that drugs do not enter the prison system.

We also need to bring in substance abuse programs, as well as programs like industrial workshops to help offenders acquire skills, for example. After all, they will be released one day and will have to reintegrate. We need to make sure that they have the tools they need to avoid reoffending. That is a laudable goal. It is unfortunate that my colleagues believe that we in the NDP do not care about victims. That is completely untrue and I hope that Canadians will see that for themselves.

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when I first found out about this bill, I was pleased to debate a bill that would get rid of drugs in prisons. Imagine my surprise when I realized that this bill does nothing to address the drug problems in our prisons.

I know that this is an election year and that the Conservative Party needs to look good in the eyes of its voters, but using legislation to deliver a misleading press release is not right. We were not elected to take people for idiots and broadcast a completely false message. This is simply unacceptable.

As for the bill itself, again we have something that is incomplete. This Conservative government makes grand announcements, but never follows through. It is disappointing.

Here we are assembled today to talk about a drug-free prisons bill, which, let us admit it, has a very narrow scope. In fact, the bill states that in making its decision for parole eligibility, the Parole Board can take into account positive results for drug tests or a refusal to submit samples for urinalysis. The Board already does that, but the law does not spell it out clearly. The bill will clarify this and that is good.

It is true that alcoholism and drug addiction in our prisons are major obstacles to correcting inmates' offending behaviours. Giving the board the authority to reject applications for parole from offenders who have not overcome their addictions is promising. The problem, however, is that nothing is being done to help or encourage inmates to rid themselves of their addictions. The government has a zero tolerance stance on drugs. Its highly idealistic aim is to have drug-free prisons. What the government does not understand is that the only way to eliminate drugs from prisons is to have no more people with drug problems. Let us look at two things. First, tougher minimum sentences for drug users mean that more people with drug problems end up in our jails. Second, without substance abuse programs in our prisons, how can we make a dent in the prevalence of drugs in our prisons? Inmates who want to keep drinking and taking drugs in prison can do so. They just need to have money and find a supplier. When something does not get into a prison, it is because the door is not big enough.

Why not take a different approach to the problem through education? Why not give people with substance abuse problems an opportunity to break free of their addictions through programs that would significantly reduce the prevalence of drugs in prisons? I know the members opposite like to say that the NDP is soft on drugs, but to me, taking measures to directly tackle the addiction problems in our prisons is not being soft. On the contrary, it shows that we understand the problem and care about public safety.

In Canada, 80% of those who end up in federal penitentiaries have drug or alcohol problems. Drugs also contribute to the spread of infectious diseases and make it difficult to rehabilitate inmates.

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• (1320)

They have a much higher risk of HIV and hepatitis C infection because inmates usually inject drugs with needles that are shared and not sterilized. Most inmates serving sentences in Canadian federal prisons will return to their communities and take with them the diseases contracted in prison. In the end, that can affect all of us.

The Conservatives like to say that, on this side of the House, we do not care about the safety of Canadians and that we do not have good solutions, such as prison needle exchange programs. I do not want to focus the debate on this program, but given that the Conservatives constantly misrepresent it to justify their correctional policies, I feel it is necessary to set the record straight.

This program would simply protect inmates, and by extension our communities, against infection. As we have heard in the House in this debate, drugs in prison are a scourge. Even though it has spent \$122 million since 2008, the government has not managed to eradicate this scourge. The needle program is a necessary hygiene health measure for inmates.

Currently, inmates who are addicted to drugs use unsterilized syringes and can contract diseases like HIV or hepatitis C, as I mentioned. When they return to their community, they are still struggling with addiction and illness. When we protect the health of inmates, we also protect the health of the communities they will be returning to.

I would now like to talk about another point in this debate, and that is mental health. In 2011, 69% of women in prison and 45% of men in prison received a mental health care intervention. Despite these staggering data, the Conservative government still has not asked for a report from Correctional Service Canada on the implementation of recommendations to improve the handling of prisoners with mental illness.

The Correctional Investigator's report on women who self-harm or commit suicide stated that Correctional Service Canada remains ill-equipped to manage female offenders who chronically injure themselves. The NDP has consistently supported measures to make our prisons safer.

On the other hand, the Conservative government has ignored recommendations from Correctional Service Canada, corrections unions and the Correctional Investigator aimed at decreasing violence, gang activity and drug use in our prisons. In addition to ignoring those recommendations, the government is cutting budgets, which is only resulting in more double-bunking and the closure of treatment centres for inmates with mental health disorders.

It is alarming that the Conservatives are saying that they are making our streets safer when I do not see how that can be true since they are cutting programs that would prevent recidivism and reduce violence. They do not have a plan to prepare former inmates to reintegrate into society by helping them break the vicious cycle of drugs, which includes trafficking, use and addiction.

Finally, before I conclude my speech, I would like to remind members that committees do not conduct studies for the fun of it. We have the mandate to examine, analyze and legislate to improve our society. What is the point of having committees and spending weeks

listening to witnesses and their recommendations if those views are not taken into account?

The Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security conducted a study on the use of drugs and alcohol in federal penitentiaries. The committee made recommendations. I think it is dishonest for the Conservative government to introduce a bill that does not even take those recommendations into account.

The NDP has consideration for experts, and if the government did as well, we would not be here today discussing a bill that is so limited in scope.

• (1325)

[*English*]

Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, from listening to the speech by the hon. member across the way, there appears to be a common thread in all the speeches by the NDP. I will get back to that in just a moment.

First, I want to touch base specifically on what the New Democrats said about taking addictions out of prisons. They want to implement a needle exchange program in prisons so that inmates can continue using illegal substances. That does not make sense.

The common thread I have heard is that the bills we put forward in the House are aimed at appealing to our base. Since the Conservatives have taken office in 2006, among all of the other good things that have taken place, serious crime rates have gone down and our communities and families feel safer. If we are appealing to our base, which appears to be law-abiding citizens, I would like to know who the NDP is trying to appeal to.

• (1330)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her question. However, I would like to correct one thing, since she seems to have misunderstood what I said. Perhaps it was because of the English translation.

First, with respect to the needle program, it is not a question of offering needles in order to encourage inmates to use and abuse drugs. It is a question of hygiene. It has been scientifically demonstrated the world over—and perhaps this escaped my colleague—that when we protect these people, we are also protecting our communities.

She also said that the NDP is lax. I would not say that. We are proposing solutions that get to the heart of the issue.

It makes no sense to put a Band-Aid on a gaping wound, nor does it make sense to throw money at this without actually considering the recommendations coming from those who work on the front lines. We need to be taking their recommendations into account, not the recommendations coming from on high.

[*English*]

Mr. Tyrone Benskin (Jeanne-Le Ber, NDP): Mr. Speaker, to add to my colleague's response to the parliamentary secretary's question, the NDP appeals to the innate human nature and humankind of Canadians. That is the base we appeal to.

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I was trying to find some independent statistics on the number of individuals who are lifers in prison. The numbers I have found range from 15% to one-third, which means that two-thirds or more of these individuals will be leaving prison at some point. It seems to me that the money would be better spent on making sure that once these individuals leave prison they have the support they need to ensure that they do not reoffend, that they do not end up back in the system, and that they do not create new victims. In my view, this is a way that we can protect our society and make sure that Canadians are safe.

I wonder if my colleague would care to comment on that thought.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his very relevant comment and question.

Studies have shown that prevention and a reintegration policy would encourage more people to reintegrate into society than a policy focused on enforcement.

As my colleague said, even though people are in prison for a certain period of time, they will eventually return to their community. That is why it is better to focus on prevention and have a reintegration policy as opposed to one focused on enforcement.

I also want to say again that this bill has a very limited scope because it does not really get to the heart of the matter.

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to Bill C-12, which has the pompous title of “drug-free prisons act”. In fact, it will never have this effect. The measures contained in this bill will not get rid of drugs in prisons.

At the outset, I would like to say that I have nothing against this bill, but it is a bit much to say it will get rid of drugs in prisons. There is nothing new in this bill. It says that the Parole Board of Canada can decide on eligibility for parole on the basis of a positive urinalysis or a refusal to provide a urine sample for drug testing. However, the Parole Board already does this. The bill will set out in legislation a practice that exists already.

That is all right, but it is a bit strong to say that it will get rid of drugs in prisons, when this goal has not been achieved since the Parole Board started using urinalysis or a refusal to undergo a test as a basis for parole decisions.

That being said, there was a fear that this bill, which will actually only confirm what the Parole Board is doing already, would reduce the Board’s powers. In fact, this government has a habit of giving more and more discretionary authority to various ministers and less and less authority to our judges and board members for them to do their job properly. Fortunately, this is not the case here.

In fact, with this bill that does not add anything to the tools we already have, the government is trying to make its electoral base happy without dealing with the crux of the problem and without implementing measures that would actually do something to reduce it.

For instance, the government has still not followed up on the reports published by the Correctional Service in 2006 and in 2008 on strategies to deal with the problem of street gangs in prison. We know that drugs and gangs are related issues. This concrete measure would reduce the problem of drug use in prison.

In addition to not doing certain things that are necessary, the government is implementing measures that make the problems in our prisons even worse. There are more and more minimum sentences and justices are not allowed to judge. That is their job. Even though Canada’s crime rate is the lowest it has been for decades, as is the case for murders, the offender population is increasing. We are adopting policies that were used by the Americans, even though the Americans have realized that those policies did not work and have changed them.

While the prison population is going up, funding has been cut by 10% over two years. This is a significant cut. It leads to double-bunking, even as correctional staff and investigators staff keep reminding us that this results in increased gang activities and violence. Prisons become a kind of crime school, not to mention the negative impact on the safety and security of correctional staff.

Services that would support reintegration and help prevent recidivism are also being cut back. The government is constantly saying that it wants to take care of the victims. We agree completely, but why not work to reduce the number of victims? Preventing recidivism is key to doing this, as these people are at risk of reoffending.

● (1335)

We could work with the offender population to prevent recidivism, but instead the government is eliminating these kinds of services as well as substance abuse programs. It has been noted that 69% of women and 45% of men in prison suffer from mental illness; I mention mental illness because it often goes hand in hand with drug addiction. These numbers doubled under the Liberals and they did nothing. The Conservatives have not done anything either. In fact, the Correctional Service of Canada says that it does not have the resources it needs to do the work that must be done in this regard.

The results have been disastrous. The outcomes and particular incidents have made headlines and they are really very sad. I am thinking about Ashley Smith or Edward Snowshoe, for instance, about whom many of my colleagues have spoken. Prisons do not have the resources they need to manage these problem cases. Edward Snowshoe was in solitary confinement for 162 days. Often, we are only seeing the tip of the iceberg when someone dies or when certain incidents make newspaper headlines. This situation appears to be reflected at all different levels.

Government Orders

More specifically, what are we doing to reduce drug addiction in prison and ensure that people do not fall back into this rut? It is difficult to have a clear view of this situation, because Correctional Service Canada does not keep any data on the issue. By the way, this information should be kept; this would be a first step. If we want to reduce drug use, would it not be smart to keep data, statistics and information on addiction in prison? Before we try to solve a problem, it is essential as a first step that we try and understand it. Evidently, understanding has never been this government's strong point, as it prefers to move ahead on the basis of general impressions, what the neighbour said or something of the kind. All the same, it is necessary to have more information about the problem.

We do not have any information, such as statistics, studies or analyses, but over the years in Parliament we have heard many witnesses say that inmates must wait a long time before having access to core correctional programs, such as addiction treatment. In February 2012, seven institutions were examined. It was noted that 12.5% of inmates were enrolled in a core correctional program, but that 35% were on the waiting list. The cuts will not allow for any improvement in these numbers. For years with the Liberals, there were complaints that the waiting lists were too long. Now, rather than correcting the mistakes made by the previous government, the Conservative government is only making matters worse. However, these programs are essential to ensure that people do not leave prison without having resolved their fundamental problem with drug abuse.

According to the Office of the Correctional Investigator's 2011-12 annual report, nearly two-thirds of inmates were under the influence of an intoxicant when they committed their crime. It is absolutely essential to get to the root of the problem and find a long-term solution, especially if we want to prevent people from reoffending. Saying that someone was clean for a few days before giving a urine sample is not good enough. Four out of five offenders who end up in the federal prison system have a history of drug abuse. This is further proof that drug use is a major factor. It is important to work with the prison population. The people are there and we can help them. When we help them, we help everyone. We also help Canadians because when those people get out of prison, they will be more likely to reintegrate into society and not cause any more problems.

The last point I would like to make is that Correctional Service Canada's budget for substance abuse treatment was cut from \$11 million in 2008-09 to \$9 million in 2010-11. That says it all.

• (1340)

They cut services, and then they expect substance abuse problems to disappear as if by some miracle.

[English]

Mr. Leon Benoit (Vegreville—Wainwright, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have heard the opposition complain about what the former Liberal government did in trying to search out root causes, which is fine, but it also did not hold people accountable for their actions. We are trying to change the system, so people will be held accountable for wrongdoing. It has clearly been effective because the crime rate for serious crimes is going down. Crime rates are dropping.

The other thing that opposition members complain about is that what we are doing is crass politics because it is appealing to the

Canadian public. If it is appealing to the Canadian public, could it not be that we are doing the right thing?

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Speaker, I think the member seriously misunderstood what I said.

First of all, I did not criticize the Liberals for working on the root causes. On the contrary, I criticized them for not investing enough in rehabilitation, the fight against drug addiction and prevention, just like the Conservatives. I think that my colleague really misunderstood me on that point.

As for holding people accountable for their actions, I completely agree, but that is not enough. Again, that is their simplistic approach to the situation: let us get offended and hold them accountable. We also have to make sure that people do not reoffend. Punishment alone is not enough; we also need prevention.

Also, I did not say that Canadians in general agree with the government's approach. As we are seeing more and more in polls, the vast majority of Canadians disapprove of this government's policies.

• (1345)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member talks about rehabilitation and then asserts blame, whether it is on the Conservatives or, from a personal point of view, even on the Liberals. Then she talks about how important it is that we work toward prevention in the first place.

I come from Manitoba, and addictions to everything, from crystal meth to other types of drugs and alcohol, are a severe problem that is taxing communities, some more than others. Manitoba has not done well. Provincial governments need to play a leadership role in providing proper programming, something that the NDP has failed to do in Manitoba.

My question for the member is this. Does she not agree with the Liberal Party that we need to get the different stakeholders working together, meaning Ottawa working with provinces, to ensure that good solid programs are developed in communities so we can fight addictions head on, hopefully then preventing crimes from occurring in the first place?

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker, I completely agree with my colleague on that. It is imperative that all levels of government work together to address this problem. Often more than just correctional services need to be involved. In my riding health services, police services, municipal governments and the Government of Quebec all work together to deal with crisis situations in the city linked to mental illness, drug abuse and public safety issues. All stakeholders come together around the same table.

A group called EMRII is made up of law enforcement and health care personnel who work together to deal with very specific kinds of crisis situations.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to have the opportunity to rise and speak for a few moments on Bill C-12.

Bill C-12 would amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act to, in effect, do what is done in practice now. It would give clear legal authority to an existing practice of the Parole Board, which we support, and that is urine testing for drugs when making decisions on parole eligibility.

What makes me crazy is the way the Conservative government holds up a piece of legislation like this, which would do an important yet fairly mundane thing by ensuring that current practice is maintained, and dubs it the drug-free prisons act. We know that the government is doing, frankly, nothing about dealing with the question of addictions in our prison system. It is an utter shame.

Estimates are that nearly half of the male population in prison and over two-thirds of the female population in prison have some form of mental illness and an addiction associated with it, yet the government continues to cut back on rehabilitation programs and other tools and strategies that could properly be used to treat and help focus the individuals who are facing these particular challenges.

Here we are. The government is going to make sure that it is able to find out whether someone has been using drugs. It has been able to do nothing about the fact that prisoners can access illegal drugs in prison, but it is going to ignore its absolute, dismal failure on that end of things. It is going to throw them back into prison. There are no programs to help them deal with the addictions. What is the government going to do? Is it going to keep firing people back into jail, keep the doors locked, and keep throwing other people in for the same kinds of problems and never deal with them?

How is that keeping our communities safe? How is that dealing at all with the problem that exists, to a lesser degree, but is nonetheless a problem?

It reminds me that there is a service in my community of Dartmouth run by the Freedom Foundation, which is a recovery house for men. They have 14 beds. The foundation provides services to men who acknowledge that they have addictions and are committed to dealing with them, and it does so at a fraction of the cost that would be faced if there were any programs in prisons. Certainly the cost of warehousing people in prison is a fraction of the cost that would be spent if the government invested in programs like the Freedom Foundation to help men make this transition to a drug and alcohol-free life.

The foundation has served over 1,000 men over the past 25 years and has helped them become drug and alcohol free. It is a remarkable program. It supports the kinds of issues the government would if it were truly concerned about drugs in prisons and in society, if it were truly concerned about helping Canadians deal with addictions, which, in far too many cases, are associated with incarceration. Then once and for all we would begin to deal in a substantive, productive, and constructive way with the issue of making our communities safer and more productive.

● (1350)

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, whose presentation has left me speechless. He really underscored some of the points we are trying to make.

I would remind the Conservatives that we in the official opposition support prevention so that Canada does not have any more victims. That is really what we want to stand up for.

We have a great deal of sympathy for what victims of crime go through, and we cannot help but do so. We want to make sure that appropriate resources are made available to victims so that they can start enjoying life again.

We support prevention so that there are no victims. We also support prevention when it comes to drug use and addiction, but proper resources need to be in place.

Would my colleague like to talk some more about some of the measures taken in the Halifax and Dartmouth area to prevent substance abuse, so that people can access rehabilitation programs and communities can be safer?

● (1355)

[English]

Mr. Robert Chisholm: Mr. Speaker, I would absolutely agree with the member. We have stated on more than one occasion in the House that the New Democratic Party is in favour of programs and policies and support to help make our communities safer. We understand that to do that, we need to deal with the situations in our communities that are creating the problems, whether it is poverty, mental illness, or addictions. We need to make sure that people understand the consequences of their actions. We need to deal with those clearly and without hesitation.

We also have to understand that these are complicated issues and that people need support to get through issues like mental illness. They need treatment to deal with their problems. Whether it is through pharmaceuticals or therapy, we need to make sure that those kinds of supports are in place not only in the institutions but in communities. A number of those types of programs are available in Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, as they are across the country, to help people deal with their connections to their communities.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I have a question for my colleague, who has a lot of experience in Parliament and in his home province of Nova Scotia. When a government introduces a bill, does it not have to have clear objectives?

I have noticed today that only the official opposition and the opposition have spoken about a government bill, even though the member tells me that it should be a priority for the government and it should speak to these priorities.

Does the member truly believe that this bill contributes anything new to the existing procedure, or was it introduced simply to win votes?

*Statements by Members**[English]*

Mr. Robert Chisholm: It is absolutely the case, Mr. Speaker. If the government is going to promote a piece of legislation as something it is not, it at least should have the courage to get up and explain why it feels it is able to consider a piece of legislation that is completely and patently false.

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): I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

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

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

*[Translation]***SCHOOL BOARDS**

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, on November 2, school board elections were held across Quebec.

As a former school board trustee, I know the kind of impact these elections will have on our children's future. School board trustee is a very important local position that does not always get the credit it deserves.

[English]

My riding is served by three school boards in two languages, and I would like to thank all the candidates who put their names forward. Election night saw familiar faces return and new faces emerge, and it even saw one tie, proving once and for all that every vote counts.

• (1400)

[Translation]

I want to thank all the outgoing trustees for their dedication, and I want to congratulate Mohamed Maazami and Kenneth George, who will serve as trustees for Saint-Michel on the French Montreal school board.

[English]

I would also like to thank Patricia Lattanzio in Saint-Léonard and Dominic Furfaro in Saint-Michel, who will serve as trustees at the English Montreal School Board.

[Translation]

I also want to thank Vincenzo Galati and Leonardo Ragusa, who were elected as trustees for Saint-Léonard on the Pointe-de-l'Île school board.

Lastly, I want to extend my best wishes to Chantal Harel-Bourdon, Angela Mancini and Miville Boudreault, who were elected as chairs of these three school boards.

* * *

*[English]***MOLDOVA**

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one week ago today I was on a flight home from Moldova after having the honour of serving as an OSCE observer for the parliamentary elections.

Moldova became an independent state in 1991 in the aftermath of a Soviet attempt at a coup d'état, and many Moldovans fear Putin's renewed imperialism. With their proximity to Ukraine, their fears are both real and top of mind. With a democracy less than two decades old and as the poorest country in Europe, Moldova is especially vulnerable to Russian efforts to destabilize their country.

The longer a democracy exists, the stronger its roots become. I was especially pleased when this House unanimously supported Moldova's path toward European integration. The professional, efficient, fair, and free elections I observed demonstrated that our trust was well placed. The election's winners favour continued democracy and closer ties to the European Union.

I know this House joins me in wishing Moldova well on its path to continuing freedom and increasing prosperity.

* * *

NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Mr. Ryan Cleary (St. John's South—Mount Pearl, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Oscar-winning actor Russell Crowe had a short stopover in Gander, Newfoundland, this past weekend. Between the jigs and the reels and the laughs and the digs with the likes of Allan Hawco and Alan Doyle, Russell Crowe let it be known to the Twitterverse what he thinks of my province: "I love Newfoundland".

I thought about that quote over the weekend, and I have a question: why does the current Conservative government not love Newfoundland and Labrador? We do not see the love in federal fisheries policy. In fact, when it comes to northern shrimp, the Cons are punishing our communities. Where is the compensation for their EU trade deal? Where is that love? Where is the love when it comes to search and rescue or Marine Atlantic?

Then there are the Liberals. They show up on our doorstep every now and then when they want something—a vote—all dickied up and promising this and that, but they have never delivered in 65 years of Confederation. We are tired of being their jilted lover. We could sue them for breach of promise. Where is the love? Right here—

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

The hon. member for Yorkton—Melville.

*Statements by Members***408 SQUADRON**

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in speaking of Canada, parliamentarians increasingly include the caveat “from coast to coast to coast”. That was not always the case. Prior to the 1950s, Canadians knew very little about our Arctic coastlines. What we did know was derived from sketched maps and journals created by explorers.

Today I have the pleasure to introduce a book that details how we as a nation finally came to understand fully the significance of Canada's Arctic. The book is entitled *408 Squadron—the Rockcliffe Years*. The RCAF 408 Squadron flew Lancaster aircraft over the Arctic during the Cold War, performing many tasks, including precise aerial photography from which accurate maps were created and conducting reconnaissance missions. Conditions were often dangerous and demanding, but the members of this motivated crew knew the importance of their work to the security and development of our country.

Congratulations go to the group of nine octogenarians who put this book together. It serves to tell Canadians a story that up to now had simply not been heard.

* * *

CHELVA KANAGANAYAKAM

Mr. Arnold Chan (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, on November 22, Canada lost more than a scholar and a gentleman. Professor Chelva Kanaganayakam was a well-known academic, respected by his peers, a professor admired by his students, a philosopher, a guide to many, and a shining beacon in the world of Tamil poetry.

This proud Tamil Canadian was appointed as a professor of English at the University of Toronto in 2002. There he was instrumental in establishing the Asian Institute and the annual Tamil Studies Conference. He also served as the director of the Centre for South Asian Studies. The academic world acknowledged him as a leading scholar and critic of post-colonial literature. The literary world recognized him as an important translator of contemporary and classical Tamil poetry.

Professor Chelva passed away on the day that he was inducted into the Royal Society of Canada for his extraordinary contributions. He was just 62. I wish to extend my condolences to the family and the friends of Professor Chelva during this difficult time.

* * *

● (1405)

JACK ADELAAR

Mr. John Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, “we take care of our own”. So run the words of a song by Bruce Springsteen. I can think of no better theme for our great mayor of Bowen Island in the riding I represent, Jack Adelaar.

Sadly, Jack passed away on October 22 of this year, after a two-year battle with cancer. He was known for his passion for taking care of others as a lawyer, husband, father, and mayor.

His wife of 45 years, Maryon, was his stalwart companion. His sons, Alex and Jay, provided teary but powerful testimony to their father's legacy at a great ceremony in Jack's honour last Saturday at the Legion Hall on Bowen.

Jack demonstrated the ability to instill civic pride in his community and to respect the various disparate voices. Never in our many conversations did I once hear him utter disparaging words, even about people who disagreed with him.

Jack's passion to advocate for his people and his great ability to communicate brought progress to Bowen on many fronts.

We are sad Jack is gone, but we are proud of what he has done to model how we in public life should give our all to take care of our own.

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ESQUIMALT—JUAN DE FUCA

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, whether it is a national child care program, restoring a federal minimum wage to a living wage level, or fighting to keep home delivery of our mail, New Democrats have practical solutions for making life both more affordable and more fair.

In my riding, we face imminent threats to achieving a more sustainable community and protecting existing jobs in tourism, recreation, and fishing. Ever-increasing tanker traffic poses a threat to these jobs, as we have no ability now to deal with potential spills from existing tanker traffic. We have had overflow town halls calling for a ban on tanker traffic on the north coast, and Sooke residents recently approved a “no increase in tanker traffic” plebiscite by more than two to one in the most recent municipal elections.

As last week's death of yet another southern resident killer whale indicates, we urgently need action from the federal government like that called for in my motion, Motion No. 460. We can and must protect both jobs and the environment. My constituents know that investment in renewable energy would create more jobs in every community while helping us meet the challenge of climate change.

As this session draws to a close, I also want to take this opportunity to wish everyone a healthy and happy holiday season.

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B'NAI BRITH

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently my friend Mr. Michael Mostyn was appointed the new CEO of B'nai Brith Canada and its affiliated agencies.

Statements by Members

Michael is a lawyer who has enjoyed a successful private sector career, with a long and distinguished history of serving the community. Michael has held various leadership positions with B'nai Brith, most recently as national director of public affairs in Ottawa. His selection as CEO will allow him to bring new vigour and his new vision as the organization adapts to the global challenges of the 21st century. Michael is committed to forging close ties with all communities across our nation, building bridges of understanding and combatting anti-Semitism and racism wherever they occur.

B'nai Brith has served Canada for 140 years, and its efforts are needed now more than ever. The links it has generated between various multicultural and grassroots communities of all races, religions, and backgrounds are a shining example of the best that Canada has to offer. I applaud its support for the elderly, youth sports, and our sister democracy, the Jewish State of Israel.

I want to congratulate Michael and B'nai Brith on their commitment to Canada, to multiculturalism, and to fighting hatred and replacing it with understanding and co-operation.

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SANTA CLAUS PARADES IN DURHAM

Mr. Erin O'Toole (Durham, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the joys of representing a riding with a collection of lovely small towns is participating in the annual Santa Claus parades. This year I took part in five of six parades in Durham because I still have not mastered the art of being in two parades at once.

These parades are great for the community. They bring the community together, celebrate the fun in Christmas, and highlight the importance of shopping locally. However, these events would not happen were it not for the hard work of volunteer committees, so I rise to thank them.

In Bowmanville, I thank Terryl Tzikas; in Courtice, Dale Gibbons; in Orono, Wendy Partner, Scott Story, and Shelley Rivers; in Newcastle, Karen Bastas and the Newcastle BIA; in Port Perry, the Lions Club of Port Perry and Kenna Kozak and the Scugog Chamber of Commerce; in Uxbridge, Bernice and Chris Brown and the Uxbridge BIA. I would also like to thank the army, navy, and air force cadets and my volunteers for helping to hand out thousands of candy canes along the parade route.

I would also like to take this time to wish the citizens of Durham a very merry Christmas and a healthy and prosperous New Year.

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SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in Beaches—East York, legions of volunteers are gearing up to pack and deliver holiday hampers to thousands of neighbours, thanks to the Neighbourhood Centre north of the Danforth and Community Centre 55 to the south. We all have gifts to give, and I thank all of my constituents for giving of themselves so generously at this time of year.

However, we in this place have the opportunity give much more than anyone else. We can create a more generous and compassionate

Canada. Instead, successive governments have left gaps and traps for Canadians to fall into everywhere, fully aware that many will fall into them, fully aware that many will not be able to get out of them.

We do this to ourselves and we do it to each other, in areas from from child care to seniors' health care to veterans' care to supporting women and children caught up in abusive and violent relationships. We will never replace the need for family, good neighbours, and a supportive community, but we in this place ought not to be standing by while so many Canadians struggle and are in need of our help.

* * *

● (1410)

FIREARMS REGISTRY

Mr. Jay Aspin (Nipissing—Timiskaming, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government was proud to end the wasteful and ineffective long gun registry once and for all. It was a \$2 billion boondoggle that did not stop a single crime or save a single life.

The proof is in the statistics. In 2013, the first full year at the end of the registry, gun crime is down across the country. This runs directly contrary to what the left-wing gun ideologues predicted, yet even in the face of these statistics, the NDP leader is pledging to bring back the registry. This pledge has left rural NDP members scrambling. The NDP member for Timmins—James Bay said he pounded his head on his desk when he heard the leader pledging to bring it back.

NDP MPs in Sudbury, Nickel Belt, Thunder Bay, and Western Arctic need to decide whether to stand up for their constituents or obey their out-of-touch leader.

Canadians know there is only one party that always stands up for law-abiding—

[Translation]

The Speaker: The hon. member for Honoré-Mercier.

* * *

VOLUNTEERISM

Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, December 5, we celebrated International Volunteer Day. I went to the Anjou community centre to share in the joy of their community involvement.

On Saturday, December 6, during the celebration of Opération paniers de Noël, I was pleased to see the women and men who came to contribute. We worked together with volunteer groups. I met a couple who came to bring bags of food for the less fortunate. They spent time with the volunteers at the Rivière des Prairies family support centre and they also signed up to become volunteers.

Statements by Members

Volunteers give of themselves, their time and their energy. Volunteering means contributing to society by providing warm, friendly help and support and showing great generosity. It is an opportunity to make a difference in people's lives and in our community.

Volunteerism also has a significant financial impact on our society. If we wanted to put a number on the economic payoff of volunteerism, all those hours of work—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Kildonan—St. Paul.

* * *

[*English*]

PROSTITUTION

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, prostitution hurts Canadian communities and the most vulnerable Canadians. Activities around prostitution are illegal because they are harmful for women and for society. They are not harmful because they are illegal; they are illegal because they are harmful.

With this in mind, and in order to meet the Supreme Court's deadline, our government moved expeditiously in passing the protection of communities and exploitation of persons act. Following its introduction and study, law enforcement agencies, communities, and women's groups have welcomed our approach. With new funding, we are also offering those who find themselves in this inherently dangerous activity an exit strategy and hope for a new life.

We will continue to criminalize the activities of pimps and johns. The legalization of their activities is unacceptable to Canadians and unacceptable to our government. For that reason, it is deeply disappointing that Kathleen Wynn and the leader of the Liberal Party appear to disagree with Canadians and support the legalization of prostitution.

* * *

HOUSING

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to draw attention to the services for our homeless that will soon be withdrawn if promised federal funding is not soon released to approved projects. Unacceptable delays and layers of red tape are impeding the work of organizations serving the homeless.

[*Translation*]

There is great need. More than 20,000 households in Montreal are waiting for social housing. Just 2,000 to 3,000 units become available every year.

Since Quebec launched *Chez Soi*, the federal government has decided to adopt the Housing First approach to address homelessness. Not to criticize the program, but I think we need to take a broader approach, one that recognizes the other essential elements of the homelessness partnering strategy. A disproportionate emphasis on Housing First is jeopardizing existing homelessness prevention services. We need a more balanced and less bureaucratic approach to helping the homeless. This is urgent.

●(1415)

[*English*]

TAXATION

Mr. Rick Dykstra (St. Catharines, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians know they can count on our government to stand up for the middle class. Even the Secretary of Labor in the U.S., Thomas Perez, said that Canada's middle class is the one other countries must aspire to.

By giving an average of \$1,100 in new money to every Canadian family with children, our government would do just that. The new family tax cut would give the majority of benefits to low- and middle-income families. A single mother with two kids, earning \$30,000, would benefit by almost \$1,500 per year.

We want families like the Mays and the Leslies in my riding of St. Catharines to be more prosperous and spend their hard-earned money as they see fit. Our plan helps 100% of families with children. Meanwhile, the NDP plan would only help 10%. Our government is on track to balance Canada's budget, and now we are helping Canadian families balance theirs.

* * *

[*Translation*]

VETERANS

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, who would have thought that there were so many reasons for the Minister of Veterans Affairs to resign? He closed the service centres. The Auditor General criticized his mediocre performance with respect to veterans' mental health. The minister saved \$1.1 billion at their expense and gave bonuses to his department's managers. He even fled the country and all his responsibilities in mid-crisis.

Now we have learned that the Conservatives tried to mislead veterans by telling them that they were only cutting red tape and not services. In reality, one-third of the 900 positions cut since 2009 were in the pension and benefits team, not to mention the 372 positions cut from health and rehabilitation.

Not only has the minister abandoned veterans, now he is hiding the truth from Canadians. That is shameful. Our veterans deserve better.

* * *

[*English*]

TAXATION

Ms. Lois Brown (Newmarket—Aurora, CPC): Mr. Speaker, thanks to the new initiatives recently announced by our Prime Minister, every single family with children under 18 will benefit from our government's new measures to assist Canadian families.

Our family tax cut will benefit every family with kids by an average of \$1,100 per year. Soon families in my riding of Newmarket—Aurora will receive just under \$2,000 annually per child under the age of six. When added up, a family with five children will receive nearly \$60,000 by the time their children turn six years old.

Oral Questions

However, the Liberal leader ensured that he will take that money away from families and put it into administration, including the creation of new tax hikes.

We will never let that happen. Our government will continue to make life affordable for hard-working Canadians.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[*Translation*]

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, contrary to what we were told by the Prime Minister last week, the Conservatives have cut front-line services for our veterans. Public servants who manage benefits, pensions and health care have been affected the most.

Why did the Prime Minister try to mislead this chamber?

[*English*]

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that assertion is absolutely false. We are reducing back office expenses while increasing front-line service for veterans.

The story erroneously suggests that the internal services program area is the only program area where Veterans Affairs has actually cut back. That is not true. In fact, there are back office staff in all of the program areas.

We make no apologies whatsoever for reducing bureaucratic expenses at Veterans Affairs Canada while we focus and continue to focus on improving front-line services for veterans and their families.

* * *

[*Translation*]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, 30 public service positions in the rail safety and transportation of dangerous goods divisions have been vacant since 2009 because of cuts.

How can the minister claim to have learned from the Lac-Mégantic tragedy when she is preparing to make another \$600,000 in cuts to rail safety and the transportation of dangerous goods?

• (1420)

[*English*]

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that member should do her homework, because the number of inspectors is up and we continue to hire. The number of auditors is up and we are hiring specialized auditors to make them even more effective. The number of TDG inspectors is up.

What is down at Transport Canada is bureaucratic travel, professional services, and waste. We make no apologies for reducing back office expenses while putting the resources where they belong, on front-line safety.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today we learned that over 30 positions in the dangerous goods and rail safety divisions at Transport Canada have been vacant since 2009—just another thing that is down. This includes the manager of dangerous goods in the Quebec region.

With damning rail safety report following the tragedy in Lac-Mégantic, why did the minister not fill these vacancies as she promised?

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, allow me to share the answer that the hon. member disregarded the last time: the number of inspectors for rail safety is up and we continue to hire. The number of auditors trained at Transport Canada is up, and we are hiring specialized auditors to help them in the coordination of their auditing functions. The number of TDG, that is the transportation of dangerous goods, inspectors is up. We are putting the resources exactly where they belong, in oversight of safety at Transport Canada, and we make no apologies for that.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives misled Canadians about the \$200 million in spending. They failed to provide proper mental health services.

Now we learn that the Prime Minister's claim about only backroom bureaucrats being laid off was false. A third of the layoffs were of people working on pensions and disability benefits.

For vets, it has been a decade of darkness under the Conservatives. When will Conservatives stop misleading Canadians and finally live up to their obligations to our nation's veterans?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact there are back office positions in almost every segment of Veterans Affairs, and those are what veterans have been saying that we should in fact reduce.

A few examples: The government stopped asking veterans to show it their receipts for snow-clearing. That reduced almost 100 positions. In the disability benefit program, 12 photocopy and processing clerks were reduced when we moved to digitized medical records.

We make no apologies whatsoever for bringing forward savings that will reduce bureaucracy.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives' claim about only targeting backroom bureaucrats has already been proven false. The government's own documents show that only 10% of the cuts were to internal services. Instead, Conservatives focused their cuts on regional veterans offices, caseworkers, and front-line staff.

Oral Questions

To add insult to injury, while they were firing front-line workers, they were handing out generous bonuses to senior managers to do it.

Why is this minister still a minister?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the opposition wants to increase government bureaucracy, we are increasing front-line support services for veterans and their families, including the recently announced eight new front-line mental health clinics for our veterans. In the service delivery branch we are organizing three regional management centres into one in Montreal, reducing hundreds of managers, processing analysts, and administrative support clerks. We make no apologies for finding efficiencies in a bureaucracy and translating those into active front-line services for our veterans and their families.

[Translation]

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives claim they are fulfilling the obligation our country has to our veterans through legislation and in the House.

However, before the courts, the Conservatives are saying that we have no such obligation and that it violates a fundamental principle of democracy—all so that they can give injured veterans as little as possible.

What democratic principle is violated when we give veterans the ongoing financial support they need?

[English]

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will not comment on a matter that is presently before the courts. However, I will assure the member opposite, and indeed all Canadians, that since 2006 this government has worked tirelessly to upload services and programs for veterans. The fact of the matter is that the opposition has constantly voted against those measures.

• (1425)

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister misled the House when he said that the Veterans Affairs cuts were backroom cuts only. Disability and death compensation, lump sum payments, health care, rehabilitation, career transition, and the VIP program suffered the deepest cuts. These are front-line services that help veterans recover, find jobs, and assist them at home. The Conservatives can no longer deny the link between their cuts, mental health wait times, and billions in lapsed money.

Will the minister finally come clean and fix his mess at Veterans Affairs or find someone who can?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I stated earlier, while the opposition wants to increase government bureaucracy, we are increasing front-line support services for veterans and their families. In fact, in the treatment benefit program, 30 positions were reduced when we streamlined health-related travel claims. We are becoming more efficient, more effective, and are able to reduce the bureaucracy by providing front-line services where they belong, for our veterans and their families.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, savage cuts to front-line services are indefensible, and all the while the minister paid his managers hundreds of thousands of dollars in bonuses as they destroyed the department's ability to help our veterans, this on

top of letting over a billion dollars for veterans go unspent, excessive wait times for mental health, and ignoring the unanimous recommendations of the veterans committee.

There was once a minister willing to stand up to the Prime Minister, but unfortunately Jim Flaherty is gone now.

When will the Minister of Veterans Affairs stop the Prime Minister from making these callous cuts and misleading veterans and Canadians?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is pretty hard to dignify that comment. However, let me assure the hon. member that the decisions taken are always made in consideration of doing the right thing for the right reasons on behalf of our veterans. We make no apologies for reducing bureaucracy and creating efficiencies so that we can in fact translate all of those savings into front-line service delivery for our veterans directly and their families.

* * *

ACCESS TO INFORMATION

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Information Commissioner has made it clear that the government is driving the access to information rights of Canadians into the ground. Her office is going broke trying to hold it to account for the continual obstructions. Rather than giving her the resources she is asking for, the Conservatives are looking to restrict access even further. Instead of a \$5 processing fee for information, the member for Durham has suggested that journalists be forced to pay \$200 any time they request information.

My question for the President of the Treasury Board is why is there this blatant attack on the rights of Canadian journalists?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): On the rights of Canadian journalists, Mr. Speaker, the Access to Information Act is for all Canadians, not just journalists. I want to assure Canadians of that fact.

Indeed, the Access to Information Act has been a success. There were 54,000 access to information requests completed last year. That is a 27% increase over the previous year. Some six million pages have been dispensed to applicants. We are an open and transparent government and will continue to be that way.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on the one hand, the Conservatives are boasting about their open government policy, but on the other they want to restrict access to information and take even more money out of users' pockets. The Information Commissioner has suggested eliminating access-to-information fees completely, not increasing fees for journalists to \$200 per request, as the Conservatives are proposing.

If the Conservatives are serious about their so-called open government policy, why do they want to restrict access to information?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I already said, the government processed a record number of access to information requests, released a record number of materials, and had an improved turnaround time. Our government has processed nearly 54,000 access to information requests. That represents an increase of 27%, or over 10,000 more requests than last year. Over six million pages were released, an increase of nearly two million pages.

• (1430)

Mr. Mathieu Ravnat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in his first report to Parliament, Kevin Page's successor condemns the Conservatives' lack of transparency regarding cuts to federal programs. The government responded to only 55% of the Parliamentary Budget Officer's requests for information. He is also calling for more powers and resources to properly inform Canadians.

Why are the Conservatives not co-operating with the Parliamentary Budget Officer? What do they have to hide?

[English]

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can refer the hon. member, as I would any hon. members in the House, to the fact that we have been publishing online all of the information of the public accounts. All of the supplementary estimates, all of the main estimates are available online. They can be cross-referenced for the first time. People can compare department by department, year to year and program to program. All of this is unprecedented, speaking to the open and transparent government that we are.

* * *

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP): Mr. Speaker, veterans are not the only Canadians to be treated callously by the Conservatives. Listen to this one.

Since 2002, the government has been unfairly denying sickness benefits to new moms. Now, despite umpire rulings, two of them ordering it to pay these benefits, the Conservatives are now in court fighting to deny women on maternity leave benefits, women who are already dealing with serious illnesses and financial stress.

Why will the government not stop doing this and start doing the right thing?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Unfortunately, Mr. Speaker, the hon. member is mistaken about the nature of

the case. Obviously I cannot comment on details of a matter that is *sub judice*.

Having said that, the case does not deal with maternity benefits. He is confusing maternity and parental benefits. They are two completely different benefits that are given for completely different reasons. I would happily offer the member a technical briefing to explain the difference.

We sympathize, obviously, with parents who find themselves part of these situations. That is why we have passed legislation allowing parents to qualify for sickness benefits if they fall ill or injured while receiving EI parental benefits.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government cannot pony up the cash to pay sick moms their benefits, but had more than enough money to pay Social Security Tribunal members to sit around and do nothing.

For the first year of its existence, some tribunal members were paid \$100,000 a year without doing any casework. The backlog is ballooning, and seniors and Canadians with serious illnesses and disabilities have been waiting for years without incomes.

How can the minister justify such a terrible track record?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): In point of fact, Mr. Speaker, when people are appointed to a quasi-judicial body such as the Social Security Tribunal, they must undergo a comprehensive training program to be aware of the complex legal issues with which they will deal. Therefore, members are never in a position to begin making decisions immediately.

Furthermore, the tribunal had in place an evidentiary rule to give appellants up to one year to submit evidence to support their appeals. That is one of the reasons why the tribunal was not in a position to begin processing large numbers of appeals early on.

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, members of the Social Security Tribunal are making \$100,000, yet they stayed at home and did nothing since the new tribunal was not active. This is further proof of the Conservatives' incompetence.

While the minister was recently boasting about his experience with clearing up backlogs and tribunal members were being paid to do nothing, thousands of seniors, persons with disabilities and terminally ill patients waited months for justice.

When will the minister get serious about clearing up backlogs?

Oral Questions

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unfortunately, the hon. member is absolutely wrong because no one was paid to do nothing. They were appointed and then, of course, there was a training program so that those who sit on the tribunal would be prepared to make decisions. As I just said, the tribunal had rules in place to give appellants one year to submit evidence to support their appeals. Clearly, the tribunal's rules need to be obeyed.

* * *

● (1435)

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister told us that cuts to Veterans Affairs Canada would affect only administrative services. That is completely untrue because administrative positions account for only 10% of the cuts.

The minister cut specialists who manage veterans' compensation, pensions, health care and rehabilitation.

Either the Prime Minister misled us, or the minister misled the Prime Minister by hiding the cuts from him.

Which of the two failed our veterans?

[English]

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in our efforts to create more efficient, effective services for veterans and their families, we have done a number of things. We have opened or announced 21 new front-line medical facilities for veterans' mental health; worked with the ministry of family and resource centres to support medically-released veterans and their families; partnered with the True Patriot Love Foundation, which gave the largest single philanthropic donation to mental health research in Canadian history; hired new staff to help transfer medical files quicker and more efficiently from National Defence to Veterans Affairs; and I could go on.

Our focus is on front-line service delivery.

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives have closed nine regional veterans offices, gutted the department and fired front-line staff that helped veterans access disability, health and pension services. To make matters worse, the Conservatives doled out bonuses to senior officials for making those devastating cuts. Unbelievably, the minister stands in this place and says that he is proud of the cuts.

Our veterans deserve better. Will the Prime Minister stop making excuses, respect our veterans and fire that minister?

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as an example of the efficiencies we have created, we have transferred service delivery to some 600 Service Canada offices, closed a few offices and relocated them to Service Canada offices in the very same building.

Over the past 21 weeks, there have been 475 visits to those offices. To put that in perspective, it equates to 22 visits a week when

averaged across the entire eight locations, or three per day across the entire network. Some offices get no traffic at all.

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the only reason that I, as a Dutch foreign Canadian, get to stand on Canadian soil is because 5,700 Canadians and our allies are laying beneath Dutch soil.

When we send our heroes off to war, they expect to be cared for, and their families, when they come back injured, either physically or mentally, yet the government is spending thousands of dollars on lawyers defending the argument that there is no moral or social contract to care for our veteran community.

My question to the minister is very simple. Yes or no, do you or do you not believe, through you Mr. Speaker, that you have a fiduciary, legal, moral or social obligation to our veterans?

The Speaker: I did mention last week that just because a member says "through you, Mr. Speaker" but continues to use the second person, it is still inappropriate.

I will give the hon. Minister of Veterans Affairs an opportunity to respond.

Hon. Julian Fantino (Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not think that caring for our veterans is an exclusive entitlement of that member or anyone else for that matter. We all care deeply about our veterans, their sacrifice, their contribution and what they mean to us as a Canadian society.

It would be imprudent for me to enter into a matter that is presently being dealt with before the courts. The beginning of all of this started in 2006, and I do not think I should infuse myself into it at this time.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we are still waiting for the final signature of the Canada-European Union economic agreement. The longer it takes to finalize the agreement, the greater the chances that detractors could cause it to fail. That is what the NDP leader tried to do this weekend at a conference in Paris.

The government seems incapable of finalizing the agreement. Why the paralysis?

[English]

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I reject the premise of that question. However, it is really sad that the leader of the NDP was in France, undermining our job creating trade agreement with Europe.

Oral Questions

As reported by *Le Devoir*, the NDP leader said “Europe must not be bound by this agreement”. This statement comes just weeks after the NDP voted against the Canada-EU trade agreement.

Canadians from coast to coast to coast are supportive of this agreement because they understand that increased trade creates jobs. Despite all the smoke and mirrors, the NDP remains fundamentally opposed to trade and investment.

• (1440)

Ms. Chrystia Freeland (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, government delays in finalizing CETA are putting the agreement at risk. Last month, France's national assembly and senate both passed non-binding anti-CETA motions. This weekend, the leader of the NDP poured fuel on the fire, attacking this essential agreement at a socialist conference in Paris.

Could the minister tell the House exactly what the government is doing to get this deal done, and when this much ballyhooed agreement will finally be completed?

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member knows that we are working hard to bring this agreement into force.

It is not the first time the NDP has gone abroad to advocate against Canadian interests. It did it last week in Paris. Members may recall not long ago that the NDP leader was in the United States, bashing Canadians, speaking out against the Keystone XL pipeline, and encouraging Americans not to do business with Canada.

The actions of the leader of the NDP are shameful and he should apologize for this appalling lack of judgement.

Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, under the CETA agreement, the Conservative government committed \$280 million to a federal investment fund to Newfoundland and Labrador to properly offset the loss of revenue in the fishery. Now the feds are pulling back. The Conservatives are dancing around this commitment and they have signed no agreement.

Newfoundlanders and Labradorians supported the CETA trade agreement and they took the government at its word. Where is the \$280 million in compensation that you promised Newfoundlanders and Labradorians?

The Speaker: Again, I will just remind the member to avoid using the second person, and to ask questions through the Chair.

The hon. parliamentary secretary.

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue and for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member already knows that the Canada-European Union trade agreement is by far the most ambitious trade agreement ever. CETA will bring benefits to every region of our country by opening new markets for Canadian businesses and creating new jobs for Canadian workers.

Like Canada, the EU is committed to bringing CETA into force as quickly as possible so workers and businesses on both sides of the Atlantic, including Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, can benefit from increased trade, opportunities and job creation.

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, just two months ago, the Conservatives brought a motion allowing for potential military operations in Syria. DND officials were working “feverishly” to clear away legal hurdles to combat in Syria. Now the minister has announced that Canada will not operate outside of Iraq at this time. It seems the legal case for intervention in Syria could not be made.

Will the minister confirm that this is the case and clarify whether Syria is off the table for good, or just for now?

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I can assure the member and, indeed, the entire House that the operations we are doing in Iraq are well defined by the motion that the House passed just a couple of weeks ago. We have been clear that our mission does not involve ground troops and that we will continue to only function in the fashion defined by the motion accepted by Parliament.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Éloïse Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, there is a reason that most of our allies decided not to carry out air strikes in Syria.

Let me set the record straight. The Prime Minister said that if Canada had clear support from the government, it would proceed with strikes against the Islamic State in Syria.

However, now the Minister of Defence is telling us that he has no plans to take action in Syria.

What exactly does that mean? Bashar al-Assad said no?

[*English*]

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is resolved to ensure that Canada does its part to confront and degrade ISIL and its capability to commit mass atrocities. The terrorist group ISIL represents not only a serious threat to the region, but to Canada as well. It has issued calls for targeted attacks against several countries, including Canada.

The current mission is a six-month deployment. The clock on this deployment began after the vote in Parliament, which expressed the support of the House for this mission. Any extension of the current mission or changes in the deployment will be brought before the House for debate.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the humanitarian crisis in Syria is getting worse, and aid is drying up. The UN Refugee Agency has identified 380,000 Syrians as in need of resettlement.

Oral Questions

Tomorrow, the international community will gather at a conference in Geneva with the goal of resettling 100,000 refugees by the end of 2016. Will Canada make a strong commitment to take in more refugees?

• (1445)

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have already made the strongest commitment on a per capita basis, of any nation, to taking refugees from both Syria and Iraq. We are proud of that. The numbers continue to grow, and they will be growing strongly into 2015.

What we are not happy about is that we in this government sit in the House every day and face an opposition that refuses to lift a finger in terms of military action to help the millions of people displaced by this conflict, the millions of people who have been forced to cross borders, forced to flee for their very lives. That is not going to help refugees in Iraq and Syria. That is why Canada—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us start by respecting the little commitments that have been made.

[*Translation*]

The Secretary General of Amnesty International is wondering why just 163 of the 2,343 private sponsorship applications for refugees have been processed so far. He has not been able to get an answer because he has not been able to talk to the minister about the crisis.

What is the government doing to speed up processing of applications from Syrian refugees?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are wondering why Amnesty International and the opposition are not congratulating us on having resettled 22,000 refugees in Canada since the beginning of these crises in Iraq and Syria. That is a record.

The opposition still has a hard time even saying the word “Iraq”, and yet more refugees have fled Iraq in the past two years than have fled from neighbouring countries and Syria or have been internally displaced in Iraq.

Once again, we are wondering why the NDP and the Liberals do not want to do anything in terms of military action.

* * *

[*English*]

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. Devinder Shory (Calgary Northeast, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are extremely concerned about the threat posed by terrorism.

Yesterday, the radical terrorist organization known as the Islamic State issued a propaganda video including a Canadian who has travelled overseas to engage in terrorist activities. This individual commanded all those who live in Canada to either pack their bags and travel to Islamic state or to follow the example of the terrorist who attacked Canada in late October.

Could the Minister of Public Safety please update the House on what our Conservative government is doing to protect Canadians?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, terrorism is a real threat, and Canadians must remain vigilant.

[*Translation*]

That is why we joined a coalition to fight terrorism and drive out barbarism here and abroad. We remain firmly committed to ensuring that entire populations can live in safety.

We will also continue to implement measures here in Canada. We plan to introduce new legislation to keep Canadians safe.

* * *

CORRECTIONAL SERVICE OF CANADA

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government clearly learned nothing from Ashley Smith's tragic death. Other deaths also could have been prevented.

Edward Christopher Snowshoe, who was 24 and also struggling with mental health issues, took his own life after 162 consecutive days in solitary confinement. That is nearly six months in solitary.

When will the minister finally take action and provide better mental health care in our prisons in order to prevent other tragedies like this one?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we look forward to receiving the recommendations of the Correctional Service of Canada arising from the report on the tragic death of this young woman. We have already put several measures in place to address mental health issues in our prisons.

At the same time, we are ensuring that dangerous people remain behind bars. We believe that people with mental health problems should not be in prison. They should be in psychiatric hospitals. That is why we are working with the provincial authorities in this regard.

• (1450)

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us try this again.

Edward Snowshoe needed treatment for depression. Instead, he was left in solitary confinement for 162 days, and then he finally took his own life. The Correctional Investigator has repeatedly warned of the danger of the overuse of solitary confinement. I do not know what recommendations the minister is waiting for.

Instead of making sure that people get the treatment they need, Conservative ideology leaves them stuck in solitary confinement. How many more incidents like this do we have to have before the Conservatives finally listen to the Correctional Investigator and put an end to this practice?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me remind the member that our procedures are fully aligned with western countries' modern practices, and we fully trust our correctional service officers to do the appropriate thing.

Oral Questions

This being said, our Conservative government believes that convicted criminals belong behind bars, which is why we are taking strong action to keep our streets and communities safe. We have passed more than 30 bills to restore balance in our justice system, and none of those measures were supported by the opposition.

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JUSTICE

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that is scary to hear.

Conservatives introduced a new law to ban protests which has obvious constitutional problems. It defines critical infrastructure as being just about anything. In this country, people have a right to lawful protest and assembly. Legal experts are already raising concerns about the constitutionality of Bill C-639.

How many blatantly unconstitutional laws are Conservatives going to bring forward before they realize that the Constitution should be respected?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I assure the hon. member that, in every case, legislation that is brought before this House is examined by the Department of Justice specifically for the purpose of determining its constitutionality.

In a case such as this, we have taken the opportunity to do so. The member would know that this legislation, as a private member's bill, will be examined by the House, and potentially by the committee, of which she is a member.

The hon. member may disagree, but in this particular case we believe that the constitutionality of this bill is sound.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, clearly 35 seconds is not long enough to list all the measures the government has passed that have then been overturned by the courts. It seems the Conservatives do not really care whether their laws are constitutional or not.

The witch hunt continues. Those who dare to protest the Conservatives' agenda near a publicly or privately owned asset that provides or distributes services for the benefit of the public—basically almost everywhere—will face minimum sentences of two to 10 years in prison and fines of \$500 to \$3,000. Freedom of expression and demonstration now has a price, a very high price.

How can the Minister of Justice endorse such a bill?

[*English*]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would remind the hon. member that the underlying premise of this bill is to protect critical infrastructure.

There are instances, of course, where individuals who have attempted to steal wire that was high voltage, for example, have died as a result. There is a deterrent element to this as well.

The bill itself will receive examination before this House and before committees. The member will have ample opportunity to

express herself, as she does. When it comes to the constitutionality of this bill, we may disagree. That is the premise of democracy. She is entitled to that opinion.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today there is another ISIS video calling for attacks on Canadians. This video is by a Canadian who has been known to the RCMP for two years.

Months ago we asked why, of the 80 individuals returned to Canada after suspected terrorist acts abroad, none have been arrested. The minister claims he cannot interfere, yet he has, stating that these individuals have violated Canadian law.

He is clear on the violation, and he is Canada's top law enforcement officer. Why has this minister not acted and taken these terrorists off Canada's streets?

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. colleague knows, politicians make the laws and police make the arrests.

That is why, as a government, we are committed to providing more tools to our law enforcement agencies, so that they can better track terrorists and protect Canadians.

That is why, right after this question period, I will bring in the report from the committee on protecting Canadians from terrorists. We are seeking support from the opposition as we move on. We will see if they are serious when they talk about protecting Canadians from terrorists.

* * *

• (1455)

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two mothers, already fighting cancer, had to fight the government in the courts for EI sick benefits that they were rightfully owed while on parental leave. Now, the government is fighting to prevent thousands of other women from claiming compensation for the same sickness benefits they have been wrongfully denied since 2002.

What is so appalling is that the government knows the women are right, and the minister knows that Rougas and Kittmer proved that. That is why he quietly settled with hundreds of other women.

Conservatives do not mind paying lawyers, but they do not like to pay sick mothers. Why is that?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member's characterization of this matter, unfortunately, is not accurate. In fact, the government passed legislation allowing for parents to qualify for sickness benefits if they fall ill or injured while receiving employment insurance parental benefits. Since March of last year, this change has allowed for thousands of parents to receive EI sickness benefits.

Oral Questions

I cannot comment on matters that are currently before the courts, but I can confirm that the litigation to which he refers does not deal with maternity benefits whatsoever.

* * *

[Translation]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the television program *Enquête* obtained some inside information about the Transportation Safety Board's investigation into the Lac-Mégantic tragedy. It revealed that 18 to 26 handbrakes would have been needed to stop the train. That means that the federal standards were woefully inadequate. When will the Conservatives learn from their mistakes and release new standards for brakes on trains?

[English]

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, obviously we thank the TSB for the report it did. It did point out, of course, that this was a case where the rules were not followed. The government accepted every one of the recommendations of the TSB, including requiring railway companies to meet standardized requirements for handbrake application, and putting into effect additional physical safeguards, a redundant system of safeguards, and we will make good on that.

[Translation]

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us talk about responsibility.

The current Minister of Infrastructure was the transport minister when the Lac-Mégantic tragedy occurred. He was the one who allowed cuts to be made to rail safety and allowed MMA to break the rules and travel with just one conductor.

Will the minister rise in the House and take some responsibility?

[English]

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the TSB's report clearly indicated, this was a case where the rules were not followed. That is precisely why criminal charges have been laid and there is a court proceeding.

Nonetheless, there are other elements of the TSB's report. It made a number of recommendations. The government is following those recommendations, because Transport Canada takes the safety and security of Canadians very seriously.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada continues to show its support for the people of Ukraine. We have contributed four CF-18 fighter jets to Baltic air policing, assigned the HMCS *Toronto* to NATO maritime forces, and sent 20 operational planners to NATO headquarters. Approximately 120 Canadian Armed Forces members have been deployed to Eastern Europe for a series of training exercises.

Would the parliamentary secretary please update the House on what else Canada is doing to show its support for Ukraine?

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke for all her hard work on behalf of the Canadian Armed Forces.

The Minister of National Defence is in Ukraine today, meeting with his counterpart, Defence Minister Colonel General Stepan Poltorak. Canada signed a declaration of intent to conduct joint military training in response to Russia's aggression toward Ukraine.

I can also confirm that yesterday, two CF-18 Hornets, based in Lithuania, intercepted three Russian Federation Air Force aircraft inside the Lithuanian and Estonian identification region. Our Hornets shadowed two Russian transport crafts and one bomber training aircraft for over an hour.

This is further proof that we are standing with Ukraine against Russian aggression.

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● (1500)

HEALTH

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the government ratchets up its war on science by forcing scientists to find matching funds to do basic research.

Scientists at CIHR say that research on aboriginal children, seniors' health, and nutrition is now at risk, since it is nearly impossible to find matching private funds unless the research leads to commercialization. Institutes are now pitted against each other for limited funds.

Canada used to be a leader in biomedical research. Now it is a race to the bottom. Will the minister stop her attack on scientists, do her job, and fund essential basic health research?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very proud of the fact that we are, as the Government of Canada, the single largest contributor to health research in Canada, investing \$1 billion a year. That supports nearly 13,000 researchers across the country doing everything from basic research to applied research in areas like cancer, HIV-AIDS, dementia, and many more.

The issue the member is raising was addressed very clearly in a statement sent out by the head of the CIHR, Dr. Alain Beaudet. I would refer the member to that, and if she wants further information, I am happy to facilitate a meeting with her and him.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

OFFICIAL LANGUAGES

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, francophones are being treated like second-class citizens in the energy east pipeline debate.

It is unacceptable that the National Energy Board is not being required to provide all documents in both official languages. The issues are too important and the people must have their say. The documents must be available in both official languages and have the same authority.

Will the government finally put its foot down and require the board to respect francophones?

[English]

Mrs. Kelly Block (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the National Energy Board has fulfilled its requirements under the Official Languages Act. Any documents produced by the National Energy Board must be published in both official languages. Questions related to documents filed by the applicant should be directed to the project proponent.

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INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, like many Canadians, I followed media reports closely over the weekend of a typhoon battering the Philippines. My constituents are concerned about the well-being of those in the Philippines, especially given the devastation caused just over a year ago by Typhoon Haiyan.

Can the minister please update the House on actions Canada has taken to assist the people of the Philippines?

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of International Development and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is a great question. Our thoughts and prayers are with the affected people and their families.

We have dispatched an advance team to the region, and we have emergency supplies on standby. We have reached out to the government of the Philippines and offered support if needed. We have reached out to several humanitarian partners already on the ground to gather information and are funding GlobalMedic to assist with providing safe drinking water. We have in place important emergency response tools, such as the emergency disaster assistance fund, in co-operation with the Red Cross movement. We stand ready to help if needed.

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AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this weekend it was confirmed that a fifth farm in the Fraser Valley has been infected by the highly pathogenic H5N2 strain of avian flu. This outbreak has the potential to devastate Canadian poultry farmers, but years of neglect and Conservative budget cuts have reduced the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to a skeleton staff. It has lost 300 employees, and 54 positions in animal health have been left unfilled.

My question is, what is the government's containment plan?

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the safety and security of Canada's food supply continues to be the Canadian Food Inspection Agency's top priority. Testing has confirmed H5N2 avian influenza. The CFIA is working closely with the province, industry, and producers to immediately place the farms under quarantine and to follow the proper international protocol to control avian influenza. The CFIA will continue to keep the public informed of developments.

* * *

● (1505)

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the political component of the Lima conference begins tomorrow. The UN Secretary-General had to set aside his usual diplomacy to reprimand Canada for its environmental policy. Quebec, which is already integrating the economy with the environment, has created a plan to reduce its dependency on oil, a carbon exchange and its own environmental assessment authorities, which are studying the west-east pipeline.

Will the government take note of the Secretary-General's comments, be inspired by what is happening in Quebec and respect the efforts made by all Quebecers to reduce greenhouse gas emissions?

[English]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have always been clear that all levels of government and industry have a role to play in addressing climate change. The provinces and territories are implementing their own programs and measures that will contribute to further reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

Our position is clear. We will do our part without the Liberal and NDP job-killing carbon tax, which would raise the price of everything.

[Translation]

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, FD): Mr. Speaker, last week a group of Quebecers from Lanaudière and the Lower St. Lawrence were in Ottawa and came to Parliament Hill to speak out on behalf of the majority of Quebecers who are against TransCanada's energy east pipeline.

While the company is going all out to sell the project, people are worried about the environmental and safety risks. It seems that there are second thoughts about establishing the oil port in Cacouna. We are now beginning to hear about the Baie-des-Sables site.

Will the minister consider people's well-being and understand that Quebecers do not want to see this project in Cacouna, Baie-des-Sables or anywhere else?

*Routine Proceedings**[English]*

Mrs. Kelly Block (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we do not take positions on specific applications for energy infrastructure until an independent review is complete. Our government relies on the independent National Energy Board for decisions related to proposals on energy infrastructure, including TransCanada's energy east proposal. We do look forward to receiving the results of its rigorous, thorough, and independent review.

Our government has been clear. Proposals will only be approved if they are safe for Canadians and safe for the environment.

* * *

HEALTH

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, GP): Mr. Speaker, addiction is a huge problem in Thunder Bay—Superior North and across Canada. Canadians are the world's second-largest per capita consumers of opioids, and these cause one in eight deaths among young adults.

Suboxone is not addictive like methadone, actually prevents abuse, and is much safer and more effective than methadone. Will the minister take steps to make Suboxone the first line of treatment for opioids?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has been taking a very clear leadership role on the issue of prescription drug abuse in many different ways, whether it is passing a new regulation to make opioids tamper resistant or encouraging all provinces to bring in surveillance systems so that people are not able to doctor shop. We have an ad campaign in place. We have invested \$45 million in treatment and prevention. We also have the National Prescription Drug Drop-Off Day, and we encourage people to do that not just once a year but every day, should they have anything left in their medicine cabinets that could hurt a young person. I am open to any ideas, and I will continue to work with the medical community on this issue.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS*[English]***GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS**

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

* * *

PIPELINE SAFETY ACT

Hon. John Duncan (for the Minister of Natural Resources): moved for leave to introduce Bill C-46, An Act to amend the National Energy Board Act and the Canada Oil and Gas Operations Act.

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

● (1510)

*[Translation]***MISCELLANEOUS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT,
2014**

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-47, An Act to correct certain anomalies, inconsistencies and errors and to deal with other matters of a non-controversial and uncomplicated nature in the Statutes of Canada and to repeal certain provisions that have expired, lapsed or otherwise ceased to have effect.

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

* * *

*[English]***COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the 28th report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding a review of the Standing Orders.

* * *

*[Translation]***NATIONAL SPINAL CORD INJURY AWARENESS DAY ACT**

Ms. Manon Perreault (Montcalm, Ind.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-643, An Act to establish National Spinal Cord Injury Awareness Day.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour and privilege to introduce a bill to establish a national spinal cord injury awareness day. This bill affects two members of the House and 86,000 Canadians who live with a spinal cord injury every day. There are more than 4,300 new cases every year.

This bill has three components. It would promote awareness, naturally. It would ensure that spinal cord injury victims feel more encouraged to actively participate in society, without prejudice. It would also recognize the determination of those with spinal cord injuries, as well as the dedication of their caregivers and the perseverance of the scientists whose research has improved the lives of thousands of people with spinal cord injuries.

Such a day would also serve as a tool to prevent spinal cord injuries and to raise public awareness about the consequences recklessness can sometimes have. Some accidents are unavoidable, but recklessness can sometimes have consequences we never imagined.

Routine Proceedings

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

* * *

[English]

CRIMINAL CODE

Mr. Jim Hillyer (Lethbridge, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-644, An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (failure to comply with a condition).

He said: Mr. Speaker, the bill would address an oversight in the Criminal Code.

It would probably astonish a lot of people to know that violating parole is not a criminal offence. It is not even necessary to report parole violations to judges when criminals are being considered for early release or release in general.

The bill would correct that shortcoming. It would especially target high-risk offenders and repeat offenders. It would make violating parole a criminal offence. It would make it mandatory to repeat these violations to judges so they could be considered in future considerations for sentencing or early release.

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

* * *

MISCELLANEOUS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2014

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, moments ago, the Minister of Justice introduced Bill C-47, the miscellaneous statute amendment act. There have been drafts of this circulating for quite some time. If you seek it, I believe you would find unanimous consent for the following motion:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, Bill C-47, an act to correct certain anomalies, inconsistencies and errors and to deal with other matters of a non-controversial and uncomplicated nature in the Statutes of Canada and to repeal certain provisions that have expired, lapsed, or otherwise ceased to have effect, be deemed read a second time and referred to a Committee of the Whole, deemed considered in Committee of the Whole, deemed reported without amendment, deemed concurred in at the report stage, and deemed read a third time and passed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to, bill read the second time, considered in committee of the whole, reported without amendment, concurred in, read the third time and passed)

●(1515)

PETITIONS

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Dennis Bevington (Northwest Territories, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present these petitions from Canadian citizens dealing with the issue of impaired driving. The current impaired driving laws are too lenient and in the interest of public safety, these citizens are looking for more action from the government.

SEX SELECTION

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present. Two of them deal with the issue of sex-selective abortion. The petitioners would like Canadians to look at that practice and condemn it.

FIREARMS

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the third is an interesting petition from constituents throughout my riding who are asking for some very practical changes to our new firearms act, because of the issue of predatory animals. Unlike the NDP, who want to bring back the long gun registry, the people in my riding are looking for common sense changes to our firearms legislation.

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present a petition from a number of Canadians from Surrey, B.C., who acknowledge that the current impaired driving laws are too lenient. The petitioners are asking for tougher laws and the implementation of a new mandatory minimum sentencing for those persons convicted of impaired driving causing death, and that the Criminal Code be changed to redefine the offence of impaired driving causing death as vehicular manslaughter.

[Translation]

MINING INDUSTRY

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present two petitions on behalf of my constituents.

The first pertains to the creation of a social responsibility ombudsman for Canadian extractive companies. It calls for the respect of human rights, the environment and the economy.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition, which I support, calls for Remembrance Day to be recognized as a national statutory holiday.

AGRICULTURE

Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present to the House a petition calling on the government to respect the right of small family farms to store, trade and use seed.

The petitioners are calling on the Government of Canada and the House of Commons to commit to adopting international aid policies that would support small farmers, especially women, and ensure that Canadian policies and programs are developed in consultation with small farmers.

[English]

NUCLEAR WASTE

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, GP): Mr. Speaker, the Nuclear Waste Management Organization, the NWMO, has been made responsible by the federal government for the disposal of nuclear waste. It is looking at 15 communities, many of which are in northwestern Ontario. I have received and present petitions from almost 1,000 people who are concerned that leakage could occur in the Lake Superior and Great Lake's watershed. Therefore, they are concerned about the possibilities of either storage or transport throughout northwestern Ontario.

HEALTH

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition today with respect to the interim federal health program. The petitioners wish to draw the attention of the House to the fact that refugees fleeing war-torn areas such as Afghanistan have been denied medical care upon arrival in Canada and that pregnant women and children have been unable to access care because of a lack of health insurance.

The petitioners believe that all people in Canada deserve access to health care services. Therefore, they call upon the House of Commons to rescind the federal government's cuts to the interim federal health program and end this barrier to care for refugees.

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise to present petitions signed by many constituents calling for tougher laws for those convicted of impaired driving causing death, and a redefinition of impaired driving causing death to vehicular manslaughter.

LABOUR

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present a petition on behalf of dozens of residents from the city of Vancouver in British Columbia. These petitioners call upon Parliament to support Bill C-378 to end sweatshop labour goods from coming into Canada.

As the House knows, it is estimated that there are about 250 million children worldwide who work in appalling sweatshop conditions. As well, there are a number of women around the world working in these deplorable conditions. The petitioners call upon the Parliament of Canada to take action against this type of abusive sweatshop labour by adopting Bill C-378.

• (1520)

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have several petitions from community members in my area who are concerned about rail safety.

Specifically, they want the Government of Canada to require CP and CN to identify and make public what the DOT-111 cars

Routine Proceedings

travelling through our neighbourhoods are carrying and how much; their timetables for phasing out these cars; their plans for re-routing the transportation of oil and other hazardous goods by rail; and their plans in the event of a disaster spill, explosion, car malfunction, or train derailment in our area.

* * *

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Questions No. 756 to 760 and 762 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 756—**Mr. Charlie Angus:**

With regard to ministerial staff, broken down for each year from 2004 to 2014: (a) how many individuals work within each ministry; (b) in what city do they work; (c) if they stopped working at the ministry, what range of severance packages were they entitled to receive; and (d) what severance package did they receive, (i) on average, (ii) in total?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 757—**Mr. Frank Valeriote:**

With regard to ministerial delegations abroad, including those where individual Members of Parliament, Parliamentary Secretaries, or Senators represented the government, from 2010 to 2011 inclusive: (a) for each trip, what were the (i) total cost to each department concerned, (ii) total cost for accommodation, (iii) total cost for travel, (iv) total cost for gifts, (v) total cost for meals and incidentals, (vi) complete list of delegation members, (vii) complete itinerary, (viii) reason for each trip; (b) for each member of the delegation, what were the (i) total cost to each department concerned, (ii) total cost for accommodation, (iii) total cost for travel, (iv) total cost for gifts, (v) total cost for meals and incidentals, (vi) reason for inclusion on the delegation; and (c) for each contract for accommodations, (i) was the contract competitively or non-competitively sourced and, if not, (ii) what was the rationale for non-competitive sourcing?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 758—Mr. Craig Scott:**

With regard to the transfer, detention and torture of Canadian citizens Maher Arar, Ahmad Elmaati, Abdullah Almalki, and Muayyed Nureddin in Syria and Egypt: (a) what were the complete costs incurred by the government related to the O'Connor Inquiry into the Actions of Canadian Officials in Relation to Maher Arar, including all related Federal Court and other legal proceedings (the "O'Connor Inquiry proceedings") for the (i) Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), (ii) Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), (iii) Department of Justice, (iv) former Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), (v) Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA), (vi) Department of National Defence (DND), (vii) Privy Council Office (PCO), (viii) any other department or agency involved; (b) what were the particular costs of the O'Connor Inquiry proceedings in each of the following categories, (i) the costs incurred by each Commission of Inquiry itself, (ii) the staff costs of the Department of Justice lawyers and paralegals who appeared before, advised on, or assisted in the conduct of the O'Connor Inquiry proceedings on behalf of Canada, or any of its ministers, employees, or officials, (iii) all external legal counsel fees and disbursements paid to other lawyers and paralegals who appeared before, advised on, or assisted in the conduct of the O'Connor Inquiry proceedings on behalf of Canada, or any of its ministers, employees, or officials, or who acted as amici or otherwise in relation to those proceedings, (iv) all expert consultant fees, including, but not limited to, expert witness fees, paid to expert consultants who appeared or prepared to appear before, advised on, or assisted in the conduct of the O'Connor Inquiry proceedings on behalf of Canada, or any of its ministers, employees, or officials, (v) the staff costs of all ministers, employees, or officials who appeared or prepared to appear as witnesses before the O'Connor Inquiry proceedings, including per diem or other contract compensation paid to former ministers, employees, or officials who appeared or prepared to appear as witnesses, (vi) the staff costs of all ministers, employees, or officials who acted in a support role related to the O'Connor Inquiry proceedings, including per diem or other contract compensation paid for third party support services in that regard, (vii) any additional intervenor or other funding provided by the government to other participants in the O'Connor Inquiry proceedings, (viii) any other rental, transcript, photocopying, and other product or service disbursement costs incurred that were directly related to the O'Connor Inquiry proceedings, (ix) any other costs incurred that were directly related to the O'Connor Inquiry proceedings, and with respect to any such costs, what is the breakdown amount incurred by category, (x) where staff costs could not be provided for any of the foregoing for any reason, what is the full-time equivalent hours or days recorded by the lawyers, paralegals, ministers, employees or officials, for billing, inter-departmental charge-back, budget tracking, reporting or other purposes within the government; (c) what were the complete costs related to the Iacobucci Inquiry into the Actions of Canadian Officials in Relation to Ahmed Elmaati, Abdullah Almalki, and Muayyed Nureddin, including all related Federal Court and other legal proceedings (the "Iacobucci Inquiry proceedings"), for the (i) CSIS, (ii) RCMP, (iii) Department of Justice, (iv) former DFAIT, (v) CBSA, (vi) DND, (vii) PCO, (viii) any other department or agency involved; and (d) what were the particular costs of the Iacobucci Inquiry proceedings in each of the following categories, (i) the costs incurred by the Commission of Inquiry itself, (ii) the staff costs of the Department of Justice lawyers and paralegals who appeared or prepared to appear before or assisted in the conduct of the Iacobucci Inquiry proceedings on behalf of Canada, or any of its ministers, employees, or officials, (iii) all external legal counsel fees and disbursements paid to other lawyers who appeared before, advised on, or assisted in the conduct of the Iacobucci Inquiry proceedings on behalf of Canada, or any of its ministers, employees, or officials, or who acted as amici or otherwise in relation to those proceedings, (iv) all expert consultant fees, including but not limited to expert witness fees, paid to expert consultants who appeared or prepared to appear before or assisted in the conduct of the Iacobucci Inquiry proceedings on behalf of Canada, or any of its ministers, employees, or officials, (v) the staff costs of all ministers, employees, or officials who appeared or prepared to appear as witnesses before the Iacobucci Inquiry proceedings, including per diem or other contract compensation paid to former ministers, employees, or officials who appeared as witnesses, (vi) the staff costs of all ministers, employees, or officials who acted in a support role related to the Iacobucci Inquiry proceedings, including per diem or other contract compensation paid for third party support services in that regard, (vii) any additional intervenor or other funding provided by the government to participants in the Iacobucci Inquiry proceedings, (viii) any other rental, transcript, photocopying, and other product or service disbursement costs incurred that were directly related to the Iacobucci Inquiry proceedings, (ix) any other costs incurred that were related directly related to the Iacobucci Inquiry proceedings, and with respect to any such costs, what is the breakdown amount incurred by category, (x) where staff costs could not be provided for any of the foregoing for any reason, what are the full-time equivalent hours or days recorded by the lawyers, paralegals, ministers, employees or officials, for billing, inter-

departmental charge-back, budget tracking, reporting or other purposes within the government?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 759—Mr. Craig Scott:**

With regard to the transfer, detention and torture of Canadian citizens Maher Arar, Ahmad Elmaati, Abdullah Almalki, and Muayyed Nureddin in Syria and Egypt: (a) what were the complete costs incurred by the government related to the civil action brought against Canada by Maher Arar and his family, including the mediation held following the release of the O'Connor Inquiry Final Report, (the "Arar civil claim") for the (i) Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), (ii) Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), (iii) Department of Justice, (iv) former Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), (v) Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA), (vi) Department of National Defence (DND), (vii) Privy Council Office (PCO), (viii) any other department or agency involved; (b) what were the particular costs of the Arar civil claim in each of the following categories, (i) the settlement amount or amounts paid to Mr. Arar and his family to resolve the claim, (ii) the staff costs of the Department of Justice lawyers and paralegals who appeared in, advised on, or assisted in the conduct of the claim on behalf of Canada, or any of its ministers, employees, or officials, (iii) all external legal counsel fees and disbursements paid to other lawyers and paralegals who appeared in, advised on, or assisted in the conduct of the claim on behalf of Canada, or any of its ministers, employees, or officials, or who acted as amici or otherwise in relation to that claim, (iv) all expert consultant fees, including, but not limited to, expert witness fees, paid to expert consultants who acted or prepared to act in or assisted in the conduct of the claim on behalf of Canada, or any of its ministers, employees, or officials, (v) all fees and disbursement costs paid to the Mediator, (vi) the staff costs of all ministers, employees, or officials who acted or prepared to act as witnesses in the claim, including per diem or other contract compensation paid to former ministers, employees, or officials who appeared as witnesses, (vii) the staff costs of all ministers, employees, or officials who acted or prepared to act in a support role related to the claim, including per diem or other contract compensation paid for third party support services in that regard, (viii) any other rental, transcript, photocopying, and other product or service disbursement costs incurred that were directly related to the claim, (ix) any other costs incurred that were directly related to the claim, broken down by category, (x) where staff costs could not be provided for any of the foregoing for any reason, what is the full-time equivalent hours or days recorded by the lawyers, paralegals, ministers, employees or officials, for billing, inter-departmental charge-back, budget tracking, reporting or other purposes within the government; (c) what were the complete costs related to the civil actions brought against Canada by Ahmad Elmaati, Abdullah Almalki, Muayyed Nureddin and their families, including the mediation held following the release of the Iacobucci Inquiry Final Report, the Federal Court proceedings in DES-1-10 and DES-1-11, and all interlocutory proceedings and appeals (the "Elmaati/Almalki/Nureddin civil claims"), that have been incurred to date, for (i) CSIS, (ii) RCMP, (iii) Department of Justice, (iv) former DFAIT, (v) CBSA, (vi) DND, (vii) PCO, (viii) any other department or agency involved; and (d) what were the particular costs of the Elmaati/Almalki/Nureddin civil claims in each of the following categories, (i) the staff costs of the Department of Justice lawyers and paralegals who appeared before or assisted in the conduct of any aspect of the Elmaati/Almalki/Nureddin civil claims on behalf of Canada, or any of its Ministers, employees, or officials, (ii) all external legal counsel fees and disbursements paid to the amici appointed by the Federal Court and Federal Court of Appeal in relation to DES-1-10, DES-1-11, and any appeals arising therefrom, (iii) all external legal counsel fees and disbursements paid to other lawyers who appeared, advised or assisted in the conduct of any aspect of the Elmaati/Almalki/Nureddin civil claims on behalf of Canada, or any of its Ministers, employees, or officials, in relation to those claims, (iv) all expert consultant fees, including but not limited to expert witness, paid to expert consultants who acted or prepared to act in or assisted in the conduct of the Elmaati/Almalki/Nureddin civil claims on behalf of Canada, or any of its Ministers, employees, or officials, (v) the staff costs of all Ministers, employees, or officials who acted or prepared to act as witnesses in the Elmaati/Almalki/Nureddin civil claims, including per diem or other contract compensation paid to former Ministers, employees, or officials who have acted or have prepared to act as witnesses, (vi) the staff costs of all Ministers, employees, or officials who acted or prepared to act in a support role related to the Elmaati/Almalki/Nureddin civil claims, including per diem or other contract compensation paid for third party support services in that regard, (vii) all fees and disbursement costs paid to the mediator in respect of the aborted mediation proceedings held approximately between April and December 2009, (viii) all amounts paid to date in costs awarded by the courts to the plaintiffs in the Elmaati/Almalki/Nureddin civil claims, (ix) any other rental, transcript, photocopying, and other product or service disbursement costs incurred that were directly related to the Elmaati/Almalki/Nureddin civil claims, including the costs of the mediator, (x) any other costs incurred that were related directly related to the Elmaati/Almalki/Nureddin civil claims, broken down by category, (xi) where staff costs could not be provided for any of the foregoing for any reason, what is the full-time equivalent hours or days recorded by the lawyers, paralegals, ministers, employees or officials,

for billing, inter-departmental charge-back, budget tracking, reporting or other purposes within the government?

(Return tabled)

S.O. 52

Question No. 760—**Mr. Craig Scott:**

With regard to the transfer, the detention and the torture of Canadian citizens Maher Arar, Ahmad Elmaati, Abdullah Almalki, and Muayyed Nureddin in Syria and Egypt: (a) what were the complete costs incurred by the government related to the proceedings of the Standing Committee of the House of Commons on Public Safety and National Security, leading to its June 2009 Report entitled Review of the Findings and Recommendations Arising from the Iacobucci and O'Connor Inquiries (the "Standing Committee Proceedings") for the (i) Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS), (ii) Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP), (iii) Department of Justice, (iv) former Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (former DFAIT), (v) Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA), (vi) Department of National Defence, (vii) Privy Council Office (PCO), (viii) any other department or agency involved; (b) what were the particular costs of the Standing Committee Proceedings in each of the following categories, (i) any intervenor or other funding provided by Canada to participants before the Standing Committee Proceedings, (ii) the staff costs of the Department of Justice lawyers and paralegals who appeared or prepared to appear before or assisted in the conduct of the Standing Committee Proceedings on behalf of Canada, or any of its ministers, employees, or officials, (iii) all external legal counsel fees and disbursements paid to other lawyers who appeared before, advised on, or assisted in the conduct of the Standing Committee Proceedings on behalf of Canada, or any of its ministers, employees, or officials, (iv) all expert consultant fees, including but not limited to expert witness fees, paid to expert consultants who appeared or prepared to appear before or assisted in the conduct of the Standing Committee Proceedings on behalf of Canada, or any of its ministers, employees, or officials, (v) the staff costs of all ministers, employees, or officials of Canada who appeared or prepared to appear as witnesses before the Standing Committee Proceedings, including per diem or other contract compensation paid to former ministers, employees, or officials who appeared as witnesses, (vi) the staff costs of all ministers, employees, or officials of Canada who acted in a support role related to the Standing Committee Proceedings, including per diem or other contract compensation paid for third party support services in that regard, (vii) any other rental, transcript, photocopying, and other product or service disbursement costs incurred that were directly related to the Standing Committee Proceedings, (viii) any other costs incurred that were related directly related to the Standing Committee Proceedings, and with respect to any such costs, what is the breakdown amount incurred by category, (ix) where staff costs could not be provided for any of the foregoing for any reason, what are the full-time equivalent hours or days recorded by the lawyers, paralegals, ministers, employees or officials, for billing, inter-departmental charge-back, budget tracking, reporting or other purposes within the government; (c) what were the complete costs related to the proceedings of the United Nations Committee Against Torture, 48th Session, leading to its report entitled Concluding Observations of the Committee Against Torture on the sixth periodic report of Canada filed under Article 19 of the United Nations Convention Against Torture, and any response by Canada thereto (the "UN-CAT Proceedings"), incurred to date, for (i) CSIS, (ii) RCMP, (iii) Department of Justice, (iv) former DFAIT and current Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development, (v) CBSA, (vi) Department of National Defence, (vii) PCO, (viii) any other department or agency involved; and (d) what were the particular costs of the UN-CAT Proceedings in each of the following categories, (i) the staff costs of the Department of Justice lawyers and paralegals who appeared before or assisted in the conduct of any aspect of the UN-CAT Proceedings on behalf of Canada, or any of its ministers, employees, or officials, (ii) all external legal counsel fees and disbursements paid to other lawyers who appeared, advised or assisted in the conduct of any aspect of the UN-CAT Proceedings on behalf of Canada, or any of its ministers, employees, or officials, (iii) all expert consultant fees, including but not limited to expert witness, paid to expert consultants who acted or prepared to act in or assisted in the conduct of the UN-CAT Proceedings on behalf of Canada, or any of its ministers, employees, or officials, (iv) the staff costs of all ministers, employees, or officials who acted or prepared to act as witnesses in the UN-CAT Proceedings, including per diem or other contract compensation paid to former ministers, employees, or officials who have acted or have prepared to act as witnesses, (v) the staff costs of all ministers, employees, or officials who acted or prepared to act in a support role related to the UN-CAT Proceedings, including per diem or other contract compensation paid for third party support services in that regard, (vi) any other rental, transcript, photocopying, and other product or service disbursement costs incurred that were directly related to the UN-CAT Proceedings, (vii) any other costs incurred that were related directly related to the UN-CAT Proceedings, broken down by category, (viii) where staff costs could not be provided for any of the foregoing for any reason, what are the full-time equivalent hours or days recorded by the lawyers, paralegals, ministers, employees or officials, for billing, inter-departmental charge-back, budget tracking, reporting or other purposes within the government?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 762—**Hon. Hedy Fry:**

With regard to government advertising related to the Canada 150 celebrations: (a) what has been, or what is anticipated to be, the total spending on advertising related to these celebrations, for each fiscal year from 2010-2011 to 2019-2020 inclusive; (b) what are the details of consultations or focus groups with respect to this advertising, providing details as to (i) the dates, (ii) the participants in any such consultations or focus groups; (c) what organizations or firms participated in the design and production of any advertising which has already been broadcast or published, giving (i) the name of the vendor, (ii) the reference number of any related contract, (iii) the date of the contract, (iv) the description of the goods or services provided, (v) the delivery date, (vi) the original contract value, (vii) the final contract value if different from the original value; (d) what is the title, content, and reference or ADV number of each advertisement which has already been produced; (e) what are the details of each advertisement placement to date, giving the title or other identifying detail of each television station, radio station, or print publication in which the advertisement was broadcast or published; (f) what is the total number and percentage share of advertisements which have been (i) produced, (ii) broadcast or published, broken down by official language of Canada, or by non-official language, specifying that language; (g) what has been the total cost of advertisements which have been broadcast or published to date, broken down by language of broadcast or publication; and (h) what is the anticipated cost and number of placements of advertisements which have been authorized to be broadcast or published in the future, broken down by language of broadcast or publication?

(Return tabled)

[English]

Mr. Tom Lukiwski: Mr. Speaker, I ask that all remaining questions be allowed to stand.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

VETERANS AFFAIRS

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of a request for an emergency debate from the member for Guelph.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with Standing Order 52, I rise today to request an emergency debating on matter demand urgent attention by the Minister of Veterans Affairs and the House as a whole.

Veterans Affairs Canada is in crisis. Information published by the department clearly demonstrates that it lacks adequate staffing to deliver the services necessary to meet the needs of veterans and their families and, quite clearly, Veterans Affairs Canada is missing the leadership necessary to serve the men and women who have served Canada.

In his message introducing Veterans Affairs Canada's 2014-15 report on plans and priorities, the minister wrote of the complex and changing needs of our veterans and that the department's processes must change for veterans in order for them to better access benefits and services.

The same report highlights that the first risk to the department is that “the modernization of VAC’s service delivery model will not be achieved as expected, and will not meet the needs of Veterans, Canadian Armed Forces members, and their families.”

Worryingly, data from the Treasury Board on the population of the federal public service shows that as of September 2014, 949 full-time equivalents have been cut since 2008, approximately 25% of the Veterans Affairs Canada workforce, leaving the department at its lowest staffing levels since 2000.

Confronted with this information, the Prime Minister stated, last Wednesday:

We have taken resources out of backroom administration, from bureaucracy. We have put it into services.

In stark contrast to that assertion, information from analysis of the departmental performance review shows that backroom administration suffered the fewest cuts, while programs like disability and death compensation and the health care program and re-establishment services, all front-line services, have suffered the most significant cuts.

To illustrate my point, the front-line program that oversees the disability pensions program and the disability awards program was cut by 341 positions, or a 33% reduction, since 2009.

The front-line program that oversees rehabilitation, career transition services, health care benefits, and the veterans independence program, among others, has seen a 20% reduction in staff over the same period of time.

Veterans Affairs Canada internal services, on the other hand, the backroom administration to which the Prime minister referred, only saw a 10% reduction.

The government has answered that despite these cuts and despite letting \$1.13 billion in funding lapse since 2006, it has increased funding for veterans programs overall.

Now that we are aware that the department has been cutting staff in great measure, it becomes clearer why that money has lapsed: Veterans are coming forward and applying to these programs, but there are not enough staff to help them get the benefits they need and deserve in a timely way.

A benefit delayed is a benefit denied, and it appears that the government is in the business of denying benefits.

The Auditor General pointed out in his fall 2014 report that one veteran in five is forced to wait up to eight months for help from the current government and that Veterans Affairs Canada is largely unconcerned with “...how well veterans are being served and whether programs are making a difference in their lives.”

Standing Order 52 provides that the House can adjourn to hear an emergency debate provided that the subject of the proposed debate meets the conditions set out in subsections 52(5) and (6) of the Standing Orders, which state that you, Mr. Speaker, must grant an emergency debate if the subject of the proposed debate is within the scope of the government’s administrative responsibilities and is within the scope of ministerial action; will not be brought before the

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House in reasonable time by other means; and relates to a matter of genuine emergency, requiring immediate and urgent consideration.

Veterans Affairs Canada’s responsibilities to veterans and their families is very much within the government’s administrative responsibilities. In fact, we would argue that its responsibility is tied to the sacred obligation established by Prime Minister Sir Robert Borden during the First World War to care for those Canadians who fought for their country.

Much of what has occurred to date is a direct result of ministerial action.

Given recent response to our questions in question period, and the lack of opportunity to question the minister or departmental staff at the Standing Committee on Veterans Affairs, and in light of Parliament being headed toward recess for the holiday season, a season in which those veterans who suffer from PTSD and left unattended are at greatest risk, I believe this to be a truly urgent situation, deserving of the immediate attention of the House.

• (1525)

The men and women of this House and all Canadians owe a great deal to the brave men and women of the Canadian Forces who are willing to accept unlimited liability and sacrifice everything, including their lives. We owe a great deal to the memory of those who did lose their lives. We owe a great deal to their families. Canadians deserve answers and we, their representatives, must have an opportunity to ask questions relating to this crisis.

SPEAKER’S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for Guelph for bringing this matter to the Chair’s attention. However, I do not feel it meets the tests in the Standing Orders at this time.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

PROTECTION OF CANADA FROM TERRORISTS ACT

The House proceeded to the consideration of Bill C-44, An Act to amend the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act and other Acts, as reported (without amendment) from the committee.

[English]

SPEAKER’S RULING

The Speaker: There are five motions in amendment standing on the notice paper for the report stage of Bill C-44. Motions Nos. 1 to 5 will be grouped for debate and voted upon according to the voting pattern available at the table.

[Translation]

I will now put Motions Nos. 1 to 5 to the House.

[English]

MOTIONS IN AMENDMENT

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, GP) moved:

Motion No. 1

That Bill C-44 be amended by deleting Clause 1.

Motion No. 2

Bill C-44 be amended by deleting Clause 8.

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[Translation]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP) moved:

Motion No. 3

That Bill C-44 be amended by deleting Clause 10.

Motion No. 4

That Bill C-44 be amended by deleting Clause 11.

Motion No. 5

That Bill C-44 be amended by deleting Clause 12.

[English]

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, GP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak to deletions to Bill C-44, the so-called protection of Canada from terrorist act. While we all agree that Canadians must be protected and that reforms to the way CSIS operates are certainly necessary, I question whether the bill would move us any closer to safety from terrorists.

The way the bill is being rushed through the House of Commons, it looks like the Conservatives are trying to ensure that we parliamentarians do not have the chance to finally read it. After the Conservatives imposed time allocation on the bill at second reading, the committee heard from witnesses for one meeting, two hours, and not a single opposition amendment was accepted.

The Privacy Commissioner had serious concerns. He wrote to the committee that he would, “welcome the opportunity to speak” to the committee. He was not invited. Again, we see the Conservatives’ contempt for expert advice, even from their Privacy Commissioner.

It is possible to find a balance between our safety and our freedoms, our security and our rights. However, the government seems to want to weaken our privacy laws without achieving any security objectives.

Further, as our intelligence operations increasingly involve working with other countries, the bill would potentially undermine the possibility of any meaningfully safe co-operation. In the words of the Canadian Bar Association:

—Bill C-44 would undermine established practices that balance national security against fundamental rights, and potentially call into question Canada’s compliance with its international law obligations.

In committee, the minister himself proudly stated, “I think this is the most constitutional bill we have introduced”. That probably speaks less favourably to the government’s record than the minister quite intended. It is quite ironic.

Apart from quite serious democratic issues, my concerns also relate to the provisions in the bill amending the way the CSIS Act would treat human sources and the bizarre wording regarding activities beyond Canada’s borders. The bill would redefine the privilege given to human sources, but according to legal experts, Bill C-44 would actually lessen the protection given to sources. I am also concerned the bill would seriously interfere with the proper administration of justice in Canada.

Although the stated purpose of these amendments is supposedly “is to ensure that the identity of human sources is kept confidential”, the new wording would limit this protection to only apply “in a proceeding before a court”.

According to the Canadian Bar Association:

—disclosure of information relating to confidential human sources appears to be limited to disclosure of information during the course of judicial proceedings. The proposed amendments to section 18 do not include any general prohibition against disclosure of information outside the judicial proceedings, such as found in section 18(1) [of the Act]. Accordingly, if a confidential human source provides information about a matter that does not result in a judicial hearing, the CSIS Act would no longer prohibit disclosure of either the information or the identity of the source.

Human sources risk their lives for our safety. The bill would reduce their protection unless the matter was before the courts.

The second major issue is a serious constitutional one. The place where we need to be most careful when granting confidentiality is in the justice system. The charter guarantees that every person be granted “a fair and public hearing”. The wording of the definition of “human sources” is so vague that it may become even more difficult to convict any terrorists at trial.

The definition in clause 2 does not require that the promise of confidentiality be explicit or written for a source to effectively veto proceedings. May I remind members that the Supreme Court ruled just last year that a promise of confidentiality may even be “implied”.

● (1530)

In the context of police informants the court wrote:

An implicit promise of informer privilege may arise even if the police did not intend to confer the status or consider the person an informer, so long as the police conduct in all the circumstances could have created reasonable expectations of confidentiality.

Expert witness Professor Kent Roach testified before committee. He said:

—I have a concern that virtually every human source CSIS talks to under the proposed legislation would then have the benefit of the privilege and a veto on any identifying information being disclosed, whether it’s to defend a search warrant in a terrorist investigation or to be called as a witness in a terrorism prosecution.

He went on to say that these ambiguous promises could “hinder or even thwart subsequent prosecutions”.

There is absolutely no evidence to suggest that CSIS informants are not given enough protection. This is a solution in search of a problem. It would actually open informants to new vulnerabilities and handcuff our justice system in the fight against terror.

I also want to address the wording of clause 8 and highlight some of the serious consequences that could arise.

I am a former police officer and I am not naive. I know that for the sake of protecting Canadians, we sometimes do need to investigate outside of Canada. However, it is absurd and belligerent to require that the Federal Court grant warrants for actions in another country, “Without regard to any other law, including that of any foreign state”.

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Even if we ignore the highly questionable notion that our courts have the jurisdiction to authorize activities outside of Canada, this language is highly problematic. The wording is so bold and so broad that it opens up serious questions. Does it apply to international law? What are the limits? When is a warrant even needed here? Did anybody think about how this would look, how it would affect our international co-operation and, especially, how it could invite other countries to violate and disregard our laws?

I am shocked but not totally surprised by this anti-democratic piece of legislation from a government whose party has shown itself to be repeatedly anti-democratic here at home.

Our intelligence regime certainly does need changes. CSIS could definitely use an update. We seek more effective measures to prevent terror and we desperately need to overhaul our barely existing oversight program. If we take a look at evidence and listen to the experts—what a novel thought—there is no reason why we need to give up the search for balance between a strong legal system and national security.

We can have oversight and safety, rights and protection. The amendments the Green Party proposed in committee, which were rejected out of hand, could have helped to do that.

● (1535)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, does the member have any comment on the amount of time the government allowed for the bill to be dealt with before debate was limited in the House and also in committee, and the impact of that on whether this really will be an effective bill?

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Mr. Speaker, as we know, repeatedly, it is up to about 80 times now that we have had an abbreviated discussion and debate on a variety of bills in closure.

It was not quite as bad in committee as it was in the Rouge River debates. In those debates, Conservative members on committee were playing with their BlackBerry's and not even looking up when they raised their hands to oppose amendments without really listening to them. This time they did have some alleged reasons why they opposed our amendments, not terribly significant reasons, but they did verbalize some reasons.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the member's remarks as well. I know he was at the committee.

He made mention of this quote in the legislation, and I will quote it again. It is under subclause 8(2), proposed subsection 21(3.1). It states:

Without regard to any other law, including that of any foreign state, a judge may, in a warrant issued...

That, as the member said in his speech, is extremely extraordinary language. We know for a fact, and it was stated at committee, that none of our Five Eyes partners—New Zealand, Australia, the United Kingdom, or the United States—have that kind of language, although they do the same endeavours abroad as we do.

Could the member comment further on that? Does he think maybe that could even cause us problems internationally with some of our allies, and with some countries that are not our allies, or whether there could even be a challenge under the Charter of Rights and

Freedoms with that kind of clause in this bill? We issued a warning to the government.

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the concerns of the member for Malpeque. This is extremely worrisome.

Canada's reputation internationally has suffered and declined in a variety of ways over the last six years, but doing something like this invites other states, and other want-to-be states—can members think of one?—to ignore our laws if we are going to go ahead and legally feel, without real justification, that we can interfere with and ignore their laws.

● (1540)

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise with some regret today to speak to Bill C-44 at report stage. This comes from the fact that when the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness introduced this bill, he said he wanted all-party support on a very important national security matter. On this side of the House, we took him seriously and looked forward to having a full debate and discussion about what we could best do to combat some of the serious problems we face.

Instead, when we came to debate at second reading, there was a severe time allocation motion imposed. During that debate, I asked the hon. minister, who had said that he thought committee was the proper place for the debate to occur, for assurance that in committee, there would be adequate time to consider this bill. He then pretended, I would have to say, that his parliamentary secretary and his majority on the committee would be completely independent and free to make sure there was adequate time in committee. Of course, that was not the case.

On this side, we believe that with co-operation and full debate, we might actually have been able to come to a consensus on this bill. The actions of the Conservatives show that they were really never interested in doing that. Instead, what they wished to do, which I think the House will hear a lot from the Conservatives following my speech, was try to divide Canadians for their own partisan advantage.

Why do we need full debate? I have said many times in the House that we are a diverse country, with representatives who have very different interests in their constituencies and very different points of view and backgrounds, and when we bring all of that experience together in the House, we can get better and more effective legislation and legislation that would actually accomplish what it sets out as its goals.

We waste time in the House, and later waste time and resources in the courts, if bills are defective, if they are not well designed, and if they do not take into account the question of whether they are going to ultimately be found constitutional.

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As I said, New Democrats had great hopes that the minister was serious and that we would have a full debate on this bill. It has been 30 years since CSIS was established, and obviously, it is time now to look at what we could do better.

Instead, in committee, there was the same kind of severe restriction on time. There were just four hours to hear witnesses, and after the minister and his officials had taken their two hours, there were just two hours for non-government witnesses. This meant that the official opposition was only allowed to call two witnesses and the third party one witness. Then there was a large group of people who actually approached the chair of the committee and said they would like to appear before the public safety committee on this bill. Of course, that left zero time for any of those witnesses.

The witnesses the committee heard were very valuable. We heard professors Wesley Wark, Craig Forcese, and Kent Roach, who raised some very important concerns about the bill, which I will return to in a minute. However, who did the committee fail to hear from? The Information Commissioner and the Privacy Commissioner wanted to appear and talk about the impact of the expansion of CSIS powers on information and privacy law. The Canadian Bar Association wanted to appear. The Federation of Law Societies of Canada wanted to appear, and civil liberties associations, including the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and the BC Civil Liberties Association, also submitted requests to appear.

Probably the most important group of witnesses the committee could have heard and did not have time for were the commissioners who investigated incidents like the Air India bombing, the hon. Justice John Major; the Maher Arar case, Justice Dennis O'Connor; and the El Maati, Almalki, and Nurreidin cases, Justice Frank Iacobucci. In all of these cases, there were recommendations from former Supreme Court judges and senior judges on how to make CSIS more effective and make sure that there was proper oversight of a body that necessarily has to do a lot of its work in secret. There could have been a chance to see if recommendations from those three inquiries could have been incorporated into this bill, but instead, no time was allowed to call them as witnesses.

Having used their majority in the committee to limit discussion and the hearing of witnesses, the committee also limited discussion of any amendments to this bill to just one two-hour session. There was one two-hour session to deal with 12 substantive amendments from the NDP and 11 substantive amendments from other members of Parliament. The government proceeded to reject all of them one by one in a fashion that so rapid, one could hardly turn the pages fast enough, let alone have a good debate.

● (1545)

I want to draw attention to just one of those amendments that was rejected, to give members an idea of what happened in this committee.

The NDP's first amendment was an amendment that would have required CSIS to provide its oversight body, SIRC, the security intelligence review committee, with complete and accurate information in a timely manner. That is something we would presume a government body would do. It is something that is not specifically required anywhere in the legislation. Why were we putting forth such an amendment? It was because in its last annual report, SIRC,

the supervisory body, said that CSIS repeatedly failed to provide the oversight body with complete and accurate information and failed to do so in a timely manner.

What possible harm could there have been in such an amendment? Obviously, a lot of good could have been done by having the oversight body able to cite responsibility, in the legislation, for providing them with the information they request in a timely manner.

The Conservatives went on to reject 11 more amendments that focused, again, on increasing accountability, improving oversight, making sure the bill is effective, and making sure the bill is constitutional. The result is a flawed bill that we cannot support on this side of the House.

The amendments we introduced today take out a piece of the bill that I think is fairly egregious, when we are talking about CSIS. In fact, it makes the bill almost an omnibus bill. It has in it amendments to the Citizenship Act to bring forward the coming into force date of the ability of the government to remove citizenship from dual citizens convicted of serious offences. This really has nothing to do with the topic in the CSIS bill.

We have suggested that those be removed today, but I have no confidence that the government will be any more willing to consider amendments here than it was in committee.

What is the bill about? One day the minister assured us that it was one of the most significant bills we could possibly have on national security and that it was absolutely necessary. On his appearance at the committee, the minister said the bill was just clarifying what CSIS already does.

It is very hard for me to get a sense of whether the minister believes that this is important and significant legislation or housekeeping legislation, since he said both of those to the committee.

The minister also said that the courts had invited the government to bring in this piece of legislation. I think that is an interesting interpretation of the court decision. The court said that some of the things CSIS is doing lack legal authority and that if the government wished to correct this, it needed legislation. It did not in fact invite the government to present this kind of legislation.

What we see again and again in this bill is over-reach by the government, whether it is with regard to the warrants it is asking the superior courts to issue or whether it is with respect to protecting the identity of CSIS staff. We presented a very simple amendment that would have said that we recognize that staff who are, or are about to be, involved in covert operations might need to have their identities protected. However, what this bill says is that CSIS could keep all of its employees' names secret for all time. The person who is the receptionist could have his or her name kept secret. It is over-reach. It is overkill in this bill.

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When it comes to the question of constitutionality, I specifically asked the minister if he would table in the committee the advice he had received that this bill was constitutional. We hear the Minister of Justice and we hear the Minister of Public Safety assuring us that they always check and get such advice. Well, if they do get such advice, I would like to see them share it with us on this side of the House.

We have seen, in other bills that have been passed through the House, when we had that assurance, that the courts eventually found that the bills were not constitutional. I think it is an important question, because it causes us to waste time in the House and waste the court's time later on.

When it comes to oversight, which is probably our major concern, we missed the opportunity in this bill to turn SIRC into something much more substantive. Right now it has a temporary chair. Two of its positions have been vacant for months. It is a part-time, non-specialist committee, yet any amendments we had to strengthen the qualifications of the members of SIRC and also to get all-party agreement on the appointments to SIRC were rejected by the government.

I know my time is drawing to a close. I just want to say, first of all, that we believe we need strong oversight for our national security agencies. We believe that we can protect national security and civil liberties at the same time. We believe that we have to provide adequate resources to do that.

What we will hear from the Minister of Public Safety in just a few moments is how the NDP is weak on national security and how we failed to support certain interventions in the Middle East. None of that has anything to do with this bill.

• (1550)

This bill fails on the grounds of providing the kind of oversight we need and providing an effective bill that would protect national security and civil liberties at the same time.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the remarks and the work of the member for Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca on the committee. He went to fairly substantial lengths in his remarks to talk about how democracy is basically failing at committee.

There were substantive amendments brought forth at committee, all of which were rejected out of hand. I want to ask the member this question with respect to one of those amendments. I think all opposition parties—the Green Party, the Liberal Party, and the NDP—agreed on an amendment to proposed subsection 3.1 that would have removed the words “Without regard to any other law, including that of any foreign state,” and commenced that subsection with “A judge...”.

I wonder if the member would talk about the implications of the government not listening to the opposition parties on a very well-thought-out and needed amendment in terms of our reputation on the international stage, as well as about the possibility of a charter challenge as a result of the government leaving that clause in.

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, that is another example of overreach by the government. There are many that I could have talked about during my speech if I had had the time.

The government is saying that the courts should issue a warrant without respect to any law or the law of any foreign state. That is not what the courts invited it to do when it introduced this legislation. This is language that does not exist in any other place we can find. It certainly does not exist in the legislation of any of our Five Eyes partners. Of course, the risk is that when it gets to court, it would be found unconstitutional. This language is so broad and so offensive in many ways to international law that I cannot imagine the courts would look favourably upon it.

However, I must also say that I am a little confused, because I understand that the Liberal Party, despite having moved these amendments and having them rejected, is supporting this legislation.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at the beginning of his speech, my colleague said that the Conservatives wanted to divide Canadians with this bill. That intrigued me. I would like him to explain what he meant.

[*English*]

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member just has to wait a few moments until the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness gets up to speak and she will see what I mean by dividing Canadians.

The idea that the minister has set out is that if we do not support this bill, we are somehow bad Canadians and are not in favour of protecting national security, while what we set out to do with the amendments in this bill and in our debate was to make it a better bill, one that all Canadians could support and one that would be more effective in protecting our national security interests. Instead, we got back a flawed bill that we cannot support.

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his interesting intervention today. It speaks to the quality of the research he has done on this bill.

It should alarm a lot of Canadians that we seem to yet again be going down a road with a bill that could likely be challenged in the courts. It is a bill that we yet again have spent insufficient time drafting in this House, and it is likely to fail in front of our tribunals. Quite frankly, I wonder why the government seems to want to support our esteemed lawyer friends instead of the Canadian public in its pursuit of rights and freedoms.

Be that as it may, I am interested in the member's discussion on SIRC and the recommendation that a new oversight committee should be established that may be more forceful and have more of a role to play than the current oversight committee, which we know as SIRC. I wonder if he could elaborate.

• (1555)

Mr. Randall Garrison: Mr. Speaker, it will be tough to give a short answer on that one.

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We tried to do two things. One was to improve the existing SIRC. That was rejected. The other thing we wanted to do was along the lines of a motion that was introduced almost a year ago by the member for St. John's East. We wanted to examine the oversight of all of our national security agencies, because as they increasingly co-operate, it is difficult for a side-load agency like SIRC to provide the kind of supervision we need. Along with the elimination of the inspector general, which was an internal accountability mechanism inside CSIS, we perhaps need to take a broader look at the whole question of oversight of national security agencies.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to speak in the House today, particularly because recent events have reminded us of how real a threat terrorism still is for us all, and that is why we have to remain vigilant.

We know that terrorist entities have tried to attack our country. That started well before Canada joined a coalition of countries to deal with this threat in the Middle East that is displacing tens of thousands of people facing atrocities and savagery.

Obviously, we are also aware that this threat may have repercussions inside our borders, and that is why, even before the attacks of October 22, we had planned to introduce the bill that is before us today, which has just come back from the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security.

Today, we are taking another important step toward passage of the bill, since the Canadian Security Intelligence Service does not have the same tools now as it had when the courts made their decisions. This means that as parliamentarians, we are being invited to clarify the powers of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service to protect us.

This bill, which deals with the protection of Canada from terrorists, will enable us to take another important step toward ensuring that the country is secure against terrorist attacks.

Let us be clear: we will be introducing another bill to give both law enforcement agencies and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service additional tools so they are able to adapt to the evolving terrorist threat.

[*English*]

However, at this point in time, I would like to take a moment to thank the members of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security for giving their prompt attention to the bill, although I am disappointed to see that the members of the New Democratic Party opposed this legislation. We know that in the past they have also opposed the Combating Terrorism Act. This is unfortunate, but we can take some comfort in the fact that at this point in time there are individuals who are being accused under this new law of being willing to commit terrorist acts. We are committed to making sure that as politicians we make the laws that allow and enable all our enforcement agencies to track in particular those individuals who are travelling abroad.

It seems odd that the NDP supports tracking all of the firearms owned by law-abiding Canadians through a new gun registry but is opposed to tracking terrorists. I guess this should come as no

surprise, given that the NDP member for Scarborough—Rouge River stood in this place to make statements comparing a day celebrated by the Tamil Tigers terrorist group to the solemn Canadian occasion of Remembrance Day. These types of actions show that the NDP cannot be trusted on matters of national security.

I would also like to touch briefly on recent events. As I just said, an individual Canadian convert was included in a terrorist propaganda video calling for attacks on Canada. These disturbing events show a clear need for Canadians to be vigilant in the face of the real and serious threat of terrorism.

[*Translation*]

In Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, and right here in mid-October, we were, in a way, victims of terrorist attacks that we did not foresee.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police recently filed charges for terrorism-related offences against an individual in Montreal. That person has been charged with committing robberies for the benefit or at the direction of a terrorist group, and he apparently planned to leave Canada to engage in terrorist activities abroad.

Yes, terrorism is still a real threat to our country, and that is why we, as legislators, have to continue to ensure that we adapt to that threat.

● (1600)

[*English*]

On the international side, we must degrade and destroy this terrorist organization power at its source and reduce its ability to rally its followers to carry out terrorist attacks on western nations, including Canada.

We are at a critical moment in our counterterrorism efforts. We must take action in a measured but decisive manner. We must not overreact to terrorists, but neither can we afford to under-react. If we delay, defer, or vacillate, we put Canada at risk for more horrific acts of terrorism. Of course, nobody in this House wants this to happen.

[*Translation*]

That is why we cannot hesitate when the time comes to pass bills that guarantee that our law enforcement and national security agencies have the tools they need. We must provide them with the strong legal foundation they need to do their essential work.

That is why all members of the House are invited to help us protect Canadians against terrorist threats by passing this bill without delay. After hours of debate, here and in committee, there is no need to reiterate that this bill allows any individual who has been charged with an offence to have a just and fair trial.

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In addition, subclause 4 on page 3 of the bill, which is only seven pages long, clearly states that an *amicus curiae* or special advocate who is appointed may apply to a judge in a proceeding for an order declaring that an individual is not a human source or that information is not information from which the identity of a human source could be inferred, or, to establish the accused's innocence, that it may be disclosed in the proceeding.

There are mechanisms elsewhere that ensure that this bill both meets all the requirements of the Canadian constitution and allows for a just and fair trial. Most importantly, this bill clarifies matters for the authorities in the intelligence services so that they are able to perform their role of protecting Canadians.

As we have heard during debate and the study of this bill, we are proposing targeted amendments to the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act, which has not in fact had any major amendments in 30 years.

All our efforts to make our national security system robust and effective adhere to the rule of law and respect the rights and freedoms that are dear to all Canadians. I will repeat: our efforts to make our national security system more robust and to better protect the Canadian public against terrorists adhere to the rule of law and respect the rights and freedoms that are dear to all Canadians.

That is why I hope this bill will move quickly through the House, go to the Senate for consideration and come back to us, so that the security services can do the job assigned to them at a time when we are fully aware that the terrorist threat is real.

This bill is a response to two court decisions that have major consequences for the mandate and operations of CSIS. Our measures only address ambiguities in the CSIS Act that have created uncertainty concerning how the Act is to be interpreted. They also provide protection for the sources that are at the very origin of information, but again, within a framework of complete respect for rights and freedoms and with access to a just and fair trial.

I could give many more examples, but we know that there are individuals right now who want to commit terrorist acts outside Canada or here at home. It is important that we be able to exchange information with our international partners. It is important that CSIS's mandate be clearly laid out in the law. That is what this bill does, and that is why I urge all parties, all political parties and elected members of the House, to support it, since it is an important step in protecting Canadians against the terrorist threat.

● (1605)

[English]

Mr. Randall Garrison (Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister gave the speech I expected to hear from him, again trying to create some kind of divide on national security that does not exist. The divide is on the proposed legislation, and the fact that it is flawed legislation.

I would like to know whether the minister has thought very seriously about something that was raised by two of the witnesses at committee, and that has to do with the protection of sources.

Right now, the courts can protect the identity of human sources for CSIS on a case-by-case basis, and they do so. However, the bill

proposes to give blanket protection. Two of the witnesses in committee warned us that there would be two problems if we grant that blanket protection: one, it might be found unconstitutional; and the second more specific problem is that it might make it more difficult to prosecute people who are actually guilty of terrorist acts using CSIS information.

Does the minister not think that this problem is important enough to pause on and solve, so that we could make sure we prosecute those who are actually guilty of terrorist acts?

[Translation]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his question. Unfortunately, a number of the amendments he is proposing go beyond the scope of the bill. I do not think they are in order.

I would like to talk about the essence of his question, which is the protection of sources—a very important topic. In its May 2014 ruling on the Mohamed Harkat case, the Supreme Court of Canada found that the service's human sources are not protected by privilege similar to common law privilege and similar to the privilege granted to police informants. It is important to clarify the legal authority in this case, since human sources could decide not to provide information to CSIS, which would pose an even greater threat to our country's security. This is essential information that could protect Canadians from a terrorist attack. That is why we are bringing in automatic protection, subject to certain exceptions. I urge my colleague to reread clause 7 of the bill, which clearly describes the procedure enshrined in our Constitution and in our laws to provide for exceptions and to ensure on one hand that there is a fair and just process and on the other hand that the act complies with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

This is an opportunity for the New Democrats, who seem to care a lot about civil liberties, to help pass a bill that will enshrine them in law.

[English]

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, before I ask my question, I do not think it is helpful for the minister to suggest that there is anyone in this House who is opposed to tracking terrorists who are putting Canadians at risk. I do not think the minister should be saying that, and he should apologize for making that statement. Although the statement was not directed at me, it was directed at MPs elected in this House, and I think it is wrong. For this kind of discussion, we should be able to have a legitimate debate with legitimate concerns. I ask the minister to withdraw that statement and apologize to whomever it was directed towards.

Government Orders

The minister talked about the video and the need for Canadians to be vigilant. We agree, but there is also a need for law enforcement authorities to be more aggressive against those individuals who have returned home after being involved in terrorist activities abroad. The minister is so often called the top cop in the country, but the legislation before us would do nothing to deal with that or add more authority. However, there are authorities now. Why is the minister not using them?

• (1610)

[*Translation*]

Hon. Steven Blaney: Mr. Speaker, before us today is the direction being proposed by our government to all parliamentarians. At first reading, there were very positive comments about the fact that it equips the Canadian Security Intelligence Service with tools to protect Canadians. I have no doubt that everyone in the House wants to protect Canada from terrorism. Will we differ on how to do that? Probably.

However, I think I clearly demonstrated, over the course of numerous debates, that the provisions in this bill—which are in keeping with the Canadian Constitution—will ensure that any individual who is charged on the basis of information from our intelligence services will have the right to a just and fair trial. That is why the fundamental principles of this bill are worthy of each member's scrutiny and support.

That is the answer to my colleague's question. Obviously, as my colleague knows, I am a politician and I have a background in engineering. To ensure that police officers can do their work to the best of their ability, I know that it is important to give them tools. How can we, as politicians, do that? By passing effective laws, and that is exactly what we have before us. That is why I appreciate that my colleague supported this bill in committee. I hope that we will have his support at third reading. This is a democracy. I fully intend to support this bill.

[*English*]

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin this debate at report stage of Bill C-44 by registering the concerns of the Liberal Party with respect to the manner in which the government has proceeded with this legislation. This was mentioned by my colleague from the NDP a moment ago as well.

The Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness has made a great deal about the importance of this legislation, and suggests that it is well thought out. I will mention a couple of points in that regard in a moment.

However, first, the minister has left the impression that if we adopt this legislation, it will be effective in dealing with the situation we are currently facing. On page 14 of the minister's own report, "2014 Public Report On The Terrorist Threat To Canada", it states:

The Government is aware of about 80 individuals who have returned to Canada after travel abroad for a variety of suspected terrorism-related purposes.

That number ranges from 80 to 93 individuals. The fact is that although the government tries to leave the impression with the public that Bill C-44 would deal with that issue, it would not.

What I cannot understand for the life of me is why the government is not using the current authority that it has to get these terrorists off

of Canadian streets. I asked the minister that question in the House today. I believe the government has the authority under section 83.181 of the Criminal Code, which covers leaving or attempting to leave Canada for the purpose of participating in any activity of a terrorist group outside of Canada. Under that section, they are eligible for a maximum term of imprisonment of 10 years, and that can go up to 14 years, depending on the offence.

It is very specific. It says "leave or attempt to leave Canada". The minister went on at length, talking about the individual who released the video over the weekend. He is a Canadian who became radicalized abroad and is trying to inspire other Canadians to join ISIL and fight Canadians. I cannot understand why that authority has not been used to get those individuals off the streets. It is somewhere between 80 and 93 people.

The legislation we are dealing with would not deal with that problem, so why are the minister and the agencies he is responsible for not using what is currently available to them and at least testing it in the courts? Get these people off the streets and test it in the courts. If we have to fix something else, let us fix it, and ensure that we do not have terrorists operating within our own borders who were either home-grown radicalized or radicalized abroad. I have to make that point.

Bill C-44, on the other hand, is basically a bill that would ensure that CSIS, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, has the authority to do what we always thought it could do. Its authority has been somewhat jeopardized, though that may not be the right word, by previous courts' decisions. This bill, to the government's credit, would try to address the concern outlined by the courts, and I believe that it does. As my colleague in the NDP said earlier, the government is overreaching in some aspects of the bill, which we tried to have amended and were not successful in doing.

• (1615)

The other aspect of the bill relates to protecting informants who are necessary for CSIS in order to operate.

The bill deals with those points, and not the current crisis that we face within Canada as a result of radicalized individuals taking on terrorist acts.

I said that I would note two things relating specifically to what happened during the process in bringing this legislation back to here.

First, the committee process was rigged by the government to prevent any serious consideration of the legislation. Canadians will note that no amendments were passed, even though it would have made good sense to pass some of the amendments that either the Liberal Party, the NDP, or the Green Party put forward. We all had one amendment, and it was the same amendment. The government did not see the wisdom in adopting those points.

The bill would enshrine in Canadian law provisions that declare that our lead intelligence agency, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, will be empowered to seek a warrant from a federal court to conduct operations in any foreign country that would be in violation of the laws of those countries. That is an undertaking that requires far more scrutiny.

Government Orders

Incredibly, the committee, more precisely the Conservative majority on committee, permitted only two hours for witnesses to appear on this legislation. For example, we did not hear from the Security Intelligence Review Committee, which oversees CSIS, in spite of the fact that this legislation would broaden the powers of the service. It would have been interesting to hear from SIRC, considering that in its most recent annual report for 2013-14, the review body found that “[...] the Minister of Public Safety is not always systematically advised of such activities”, referring to sensitive intelligence gathering, “nor is he informed of them in a consistent manner”.

Of even greater concern, and an issue on which the committee was denied the ability to question SIRC, is that the bill could permit possible illegal international operations. This was of great concern. We tried to propose an amendment that the Minister of Foreign Affairs be informed. We felt we needed to hear from SIRC on that issue. There could be an illegal operation that violates the laws of another country and our operatives are found out. If we are in a trading relationship or a security relationship or whatever with that country and the Minister of Foreign Affairs is not even informed, would it not put our country's trade and commerce in a bad position?

The Conservatives would not accept a simple amendment asking for the Minister of Foreign Affairs to be informed of such illegal activities by CSIS in other countries. SIRC was making the point that before Bill C-44 was even tabled, the Minister of Public Safety was apparently willing to be kept ignorant of much of what CSIS might actually be doing.

The last point I would make is that there needs to be national oversight over all of our security agencies, as all of our Five Eyes partners have in place. Parliamentary oversight makes sense. We would be doing our job and being held responsible for the oversight of these national security agencies.

We have some concerns with the bill, in that the amendments were not accepted, but for the greater interest of our country and the authorities of CSIS, the bill does need to go through in order to protect our sources and to implement the other measures in it.

● (1620)

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am a bit confused about the hon. member's position. It sounded like a fine and thorough analysis of the bill, yet he ends up saying that we really need certain types of oversight. When one uses that type of language, about needing certain oversight of CSIS and yet the bill does not provide that oversight, I am left wondering how it is that he ends up reconciling that requirement for oversight with his support of a bill that does not have it.

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service is, I believe, one of the better security agencies in the world. What is in the bill is required as a result of court decisions and to give CSIS the authority to do what it has done in the past, protecting Canadian citizens who are informing the ministry of some serious endeavours that may be going on in Canada or around the world.

The member asks a good question. In terms of oversight, there is at the moment SIRC, which does, after the fact, review the activities of CSIS. It has reported on that.

However, I believe there must be more robust oversight of all our national security agencies, CSIS, CSEC, et cetera, and even in terms of policing as it relates to terrorism and international affairs. All of our other Five Eyes partners have parliamentary oversight. The committee members are sworn to secrecy when seeing classified information. They would have information in a proactive way to ensure that our security agencies are doing their job under the law and are also not overreaching and violating the privacy of citizens.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, earlier today in question period my colleague raised and did a fabulous job highlighting the importance of what the government can be doing in regard to terrorist actions. I wonder if he could expand on his question and maybe even provide a comment on the minister's answer.

● (1625)

Hon. Wayne Easter: Mr. Speaker, the minister's answer, as usual, was basically a non-answer.

The question related to the fact that the minister claimed, some two months ago now, that a number of individuals had returned to Canada after engaging in suspected terrorist activities abroad. At that time it was 80. It is now up to about 93. He said at the time, “These individuals...have violated Canadian law”.

The minister is very clear on the violation. He is also the top cop. He is in charge of law enforcement in our country. The agencies that are under his authority, CSIS and the RCMP, work with other law enforcement agencies. If the minister claims these individuals have violated Canadian law, then why has the government, with all its authority, not taken these terrorists off Canadian streets?

That is the issue here. It does have the authority, in my view, under section 83.181 of the Criminal Code, which states that leaving or attempting to leave Canada for the purpose of participating in any activity of a terrorist group outside of Canada is indictable for 10 to 14 years. Why has the government not used that section? It has not answered that question. It continues to go around it. We need some answers.

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-44, an act to amend the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act and other acts.

In a sense, this bill has been a long time coming. It has been 30 years since this place turned its mind to the CSIS act. Much has changed. It makes sense to update or modernize this legislation.

Government Orders

We, on this side of the House, supported this bill at second reading, not because it was perfect, far from it, but out of recognition that there are many issues swirling around this and through the courts on matters of national security and intelligence services.

The bill has been returned to us, however, from committee unamended, in spite of the age of the current legislation and the issues confronting us on matters related to intelligence and national security. The bill had but four hours of scrutiny at the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security. True to form, amendments put forward by the opposition, recommendations put forward by expert witnesses, and cautions issued by experts were all turned aside, dismissed, and defeated.

We have before us a flawed bill, one not worthy of support. What this bill betrays is a government unprepared, unable, or incapable of doing the difficult but necessary work of ensuring that Canadians have both security and their civil liberties. Indeed, in this bill, and in the government's world view it would seem, civil liberties must wait for security.

It is arguable that in this bill and all that the government does, it tends to see civil liberty itself as a security risk. This would explain why the government so unflinchingly tramples over the rule of law, our own as well as that of others, and has such little concern about and does so little to provide civilian oversight of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service.

Here is my case for this. First, the bill provides blanket protection of identity for all CSIS human sources in legal proceedings, including criminal and immigration cases. There is no opportunity provided for the accused or respondent to confront the accuser and test the evidence. Such an opportunity is considered a fundamental part of our justice system.

How courts respond to such a denial in practice is left to be determined. It is unclear from here. Will the courts respond so that this becomes an obstacle to successful prosecution, will they allow this to enhance their probability of successful prosecution, or will the courts challenge the constitutionality of this provision? All of this is to be determined.

Second, the practical implications and, indeed, the threat of this amendment, become clear when one notes that this bill amends the Canadian Citizenship Act by accelerating the timeline for the revocation of citizenship for dual citizens found to be engaged in terrorist activities and other serious crimes.

It is out of our deep concern for the expedited revocation of citizenship in the broader context of this bill that we have proposed amendments before the House at this stage relating to these provisions.

Third, this bill tries to escape the views expressed by the courts starting in 2007 with respect to CSIS actions and surveillance abroad. Those views were eventually set out in a decision by the Federal Court in 2013 that declared illegal the practices of CSIS for obtaining warrants for conducting surveillance of Canadians abroad.

The response by this government through this bill comes in the form of essentially continuing its practices under the cover of the

following language in the bill: "Without regard to any other law, including that of any foreign state...".

● (1630)

Fourth, and perhaps most tellingly, while the bill gives CSIS new powers, it does nothing to enhance civilian oversight of the organization. More than that, it does nothing even to repair existing age-old shortcomings in civilian oversight of CSIS. The Arar commission concluded in 2006 that improved civilian oversight of CSIS was needed, but was ignored.

Privacy and information commissioners of Canada have asked the government to ensure that effective oversight be included in any legislation establishing additional powers for intelligence and law enforcement agencies, such as this one. That too has been ignored.

We echo their call. Civilian oversight is our means of ensuring that security and intelligence services can do their part to provide for the security and safety of Canadians without diminishing our civil liberties.

Under the bill, the government gives civilian oversight not even secondary consideration. It gets no consideration. Under Bill C-44, civilian oversight, such as it is, staggers forward. The current review agency, the Security Intelligence Review Committee, is a part-time committee of the Prime Minister's appointees. We have been through Chuck Strahl and Arthur Porter as chairs. Now we have former Reform MP Deborah Grey as interim chair. Two of the five vacancies on the committee have in fact been vacant for months.

In the 2012 budget, the Conservatives eliminated the position of inspector general of CSIS. The inspector general was the internal monitoring unit within the service, responsible for checking all CSIS activities for compliance with the law. The inspector general's responsibilities were passed along to the Security Intelligence Review Committee with its rotating chair and vacant seats.

NDP members of the public safety and national security committee proposed three very reasonable amendments to enhance civilian oversight of CSIS. The first of these flowed from the recent SIRC report. It called simply for a requirement that CSIS provide complete and accurate information to SIRC in a timely manner in order to facilitate proper oversight of the service.

The second proposed amendment would have ensured that those appointed to SIRC had the expertise necessary for the role, such as in the administration of justice and national security and so on.

Government Orders

The third proposed amendment called for appointments to SIRC to have the support of the Leader of the Opposition so as to extract ourselves from this process of partisan appointments to such critically important oversight roles.

These are all simple, reasonable amendments to a very important component of the security intelligence services, all rejected by the Conservatives, leaving civil liberties at risk, easily and unnecessarily sacrificed under a government that seems not to believe that civil liberties and national security ought, indeed, co-exist if we are to live in the kind of Canada that we desire.

Our democratic values must not be compromised in the pursuit of enhanced public safety. They need not be compromised. Protecting civil liberties and public safety are both core Canadian values, and improvements to one must never, and should not and need not, come at the expense of the other.

As Privacy Commissioner Daniel Carrion put it, it is understandable that the government would want to consider boosting the powers of law enforcement and national security agencies to address potential gaps, but any new tools should be accompanied by a beefed up role for the watchdogs who keep an eye on spies and police.

The fact is that despite all its shortcomings, this bill could have been improved when it went through committee, a process by which we can arrive at well-informed policy. Instead of giving the bill the careful study it deserved, it was rammed through committee, which only heard four hours of testimony from independent experts.

The Conservatives have once again rushed legislation through the House with total disregard for any recommendations for improvement. This, unfortunately, has become a defining characteristic of the government.

• (1635)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on the member's last comments on the issue of process. We know, as a whole, there is a significant percentage of Canada's population that follows very closely what is happening internationally, and the fear factor for terrorism is actually quite high.

Let us look at the government's behaviour regarding this bill. It says that it is such an important issue for the House and yet it limits debate, whether it is time allocation or, as the member has pointed out, a very limited amount of time in committee, with no recognition of opposition amendments. Again, that is fairly typical of the government.

I would ask him to provide some commentary on the following. If the government genuinely believes that terrorism is an important issue, why does it not allow for good, solid, legitimate debate in the chamber and allow, for example, additional presenters to appear in committee who have really excellent understanding and comprehension of the issue before us today?

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Speaker, the member is quite right. There are some stark contradictions between identifying this issue of national security and intelligence services as one of great importance to Canadians and to the House, yet not providing the House and the public safety committee with sufficient time to discuss the matter, given the importance that it warrants.

There are a number of contradictions. The government, in fact, tracks a risky course by assuming that it has the correct answers on these matters. There are committees and committee processes for some very good reasons, and that is to allow outside expertise into this process to provide the benefit of its experience and expertise. By not giving sufficient time to allow people to comment on the bill before us, it puts this process at great risk, and that too is a contradiction to the importance the government says it provides to this issue of national security.

[Translation]

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his very interesting and telling speech.

[English]

I would like to ask the member a question regarding the process. Indeed, there was very little time in committee, as he quite rightly mentioned in his presentation, to discuss the terms of this bill. We have heard from many experts in the field that a legal challenge is highly likely, meaning there will be an awful lot of wasted time and energy in front of the courts challenging the terms of this bill, likely meaning we will have wasted a lot of taxpayer money defending the undefendable.

Would it not have been a more judicious use of our time and energy in the House to put the bill through more exhaustive discussions instead of forcing individuals to spend their hard-earned money in front of the courts, perhaps having to ultimately bring it to the Supreme Court, a truly supreme waste of resources?

• (1640)

Mr. Matthew Kellway: Mr. Speaker, I certainly agree. It is true of everything that we do in the House. It is worth taking the time to get it right. However, continuing the theme of contradictions with the government, on this of all issues one would have thought it would have taken the time to get it right and to ensure there was ample study and expertise allowed to inform the bill.

On that same issue of contradiction, the government says that this is an incredibly important issue and yet over the last three years, it has cut almost \$700 million from security agencies in Canada. Those cuts will continue into next year with respect to CSIS in particular, another \$25 million or so.

The government purports to have great concern for the security and safety of Canadians and yet the process for this bill betrays its other interests. The way it budgets for security agencies also suggests that, indeed, it is not a priority for the government.

[Translation]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It is my duty, pursuant to Standing Order 38, to inform the House that the question to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment is as follows: the hon. member for Drummond, The Environment.

Government Orders

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today, I have the honour to rise to speak to Bill C-44.

[*English*]

The bill would amend the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act and other acts. It is a troubling bill, one that I do not believe I can support.

I will start by citing a recent article in *The Globe and Mail*, October 27. In that article, it states:

In recent rulings from several courts, Canadian judges had prevented CSIS from getting new powers through legal decisions, saying that these could only be conferred by Parliament.

For example, the Supreme Court last year declined to give CSIS informants a “class privilege” intended to better shield their identities in court proceedings. And, last year, Federal Court Judge Richard Mosley reined in a telecommunications-intercept power—known in CSIS lexicon as a...domestic interception of foreign telecommunications” warrant.

CSIS officials have said the Federal Court ruling created a “black hole” obstructing their pursuit of “homegrown” terrorism suspects migrating to foreign war zones.

C-44 allows CSIS to better shield informants’ identities.

It would also allow CSIS—with a judge’s approval—to capture conversations involving Canadian suspects taking place abroad.

I will end with the final part, which states:

“Without regard to any other law, including that of a foreign state, a judge may in a warrant authorize activities outside Canada to enable the Service to investigate a threat to the security of Canada,” the legislation reads.

It is a very clear exposé of what this bill intends to do, so I encourage people to read that article. It shows exactly where we are going.

Let us go through a short history of why this bill is being presented in the House.

Back in the day when CSIS was created, it was assumed that because its enabling legislation made threats to Canadian security abroad, there may be an implicit right to do some of the things that this bill pretends to deal with. We will remember that CSIS was created after a barn burning ceremony in Quebec where the RCMP was found to have overextended its rights and obligations, and investigated Canadian citizens without legal warrant and legal cause. The Keable Commission in Quebec then was struck and the McDonald Commission, its parallel commission, was struck by our Parliament. After that, CSIS was born.

It has been a work in progress ever since. The government argues that we have not modified the legislation in 30 years. Perhaps a review is warranted. Certainly the Canadian public is becoming more conscious of security threats and having a more exhaustive debate on this subject is probably warranted. The problem is that we do not have an exhaustive debate; we have an express debate. We have a very fast debate and we do not have a lot of input from the experts.

If we look at the short history of why this is being brought forward, we can bring forward the question of the Supreme Court decision in 2007, where CSIS was seeking surveillance assistance from our allied spy services, which we have mentioned a few times in the House as the “Five Eyes”, the allied security services in

Canada, New Zealand, Australia, United Kingdom and United States.

There was a further court case in 2008 by Federal Court Justice Blanchard, which specifically stated that the CSIS Act did not contain extraterritorial provisions with respect to covert surveillance. There starts the slippery slide toward the new legal status quo where we do not believe CSIS has the overseas powers that it may need to do its job. However, the problem is that we may have gone too far. I will get back to that in a moment.

We further went on in 2013, where Federal Court Justice Mosley, as was referred to in *The Globe and Mail* article, not only suggested that CSIS had overstepped its bounds with extraterritorial powers, but if it continued, it would be illegal and he would take steps.

● (1645)

There was reason to bring the bill forward, and I do not discount that. Unfortunately, the government seems to not want to hear from the experts. One of those experts is the Canadian Bar Association, which is surely one of the better organizations to get an interpretation regarding current bills.

I will start with the statement that representatives of the Bar Association tabled with the committee, but were not able to present as they did not have time. Nor was the committee open to extending the time to give the representatives the chance to actually testify.

The Canadian Bar Association made it very clear that, in its opinion, section 18 of the proposed act would actually reduce the protection that Canadian citizens had. In fact, if a confidential human source provided information about a matter that did not result in a judicial hearing, the CSIS Act would no longer prohibit disclosure of either the information or the identity of the source. The proposed section 18 of the CSIS Act would protect disclosure from sources, but only if they were disclosed in judicial proceedings. However, the current article 18 of the act will actually protect those same informants regardless whether proceedings are in play or not.

Therefore, the question is this. Why in the world are we removing a protection that allows people to speak to CSIS without fear of their name being disclosed? The confidentiality may very well help, but in the case of the proposed legislation, we would actually reduce the confidentiality.

I remind people in the House of the Plame Affair back in the day of the Bush administration in the United States when the identity of a CIA worker was fully disclosed. I wonder if this amendment is not trying to replicate that disaster.

I would also point out a question that has been brought up many times in our courts. With the changing attitude toward international terrorism and international threats to public security, for good or for bad, we created the security certificate proceedings, and within that we created the special advocate regime. The special advocate, again for good or for bad, is an advocate for a person who is accused, such as Charkaoui or Harkat, which are recent cases that have made it to the Supreme Court. Individuals are detained by security certificate and they are named a special advocate who is well trained and well versed in security matters.

Government Orders

I really wish the representatives of the Canadian Bar Association had a chance to speak to the committee, because their presentations and concerns are well-founded and certainly worth listening to. However, I will point out, as did the Canadian Bar Association, that in Charkaoui, the Supreme Court accepted that the national security concerns could justify procedural modifications, including limits on the open-court principle, but indicated that those concerns could not be permitted to erode the essence of section 7 of the charter, and that meaningful and substantial protection would be required to satisfy section 7.

If members will recall, section 7 is the section that provides some protections, and I will read it into the record. It has been said, but I will say it again:

Everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person and the right not to be deprived thereof except in accordance with the principles of fundamental justice.

The problem with the bill as it stands now is that it seems to be going in a direction where we would be removing people's fundamental rights as protected under section 7 of the charter. These matters would almost certainly be challenged in the courts.

I do not have a lot of time to bring other matters forward regarding the bill, but the only protection we seem to have is with the Security Intelligence Review Committee, SIRC, which has been challenged on many occasions as being simply a part-time committee. It is not a committee of the House, but a committee appointed by the Prime Minister. Currently, two of the five seats are vacant. There is only an interim chair of the committee who has not had the opportunity to call meetings of the committee nearly as frequently as there should be.

I would like to have brought more issues forward, but I will leave it at that for now. I am open to questions if members have more concerns that they would like to raise.

• (1650)

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think the member's remarks show clearly why more time needed to be taken at committee, because the member does raise some very valid points.

I want to put into the record what Wesley Wark had to say in his testimony. Wesley Wark is a professor at the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Ottawa and is a quite well-known expert on these matters.

The member said there is certainly reason to bring the bill forward, but I think, as he indicated in his speech, there is so much more that we could have done. As Wesley pointed out before committee:

Bill C-44 does not add any new provisions to the CSIS Act to ensure proper consultation between the service and its minister, the Minister of Public Safety, and the two departments most likely to be impacted by expanded CSIS overseas operations—the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development and the Department of National Defence. Both of these departments engage in their own overseas intelligence and information collection through dedicated branches.

Does the member believe that we should have looked into that area and ensured that there is more information exchanged between government branches?

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, that is a very valid question. I think there are an awful lot of improvements we could have made to

the bill. His suggestion is certainly one that I think we should have taken much more seriously at the committee. Regrettably, although amendments were brought forward, none were retained by the current government. I think we should have taken a lot more time to review this bill.

I would remind the members that the Arar commission also made a series of recommendations, including recommendations to improve parliamentary oversight and to improve SIRC with a new agency, INSRCC. None of those proposals has been retained by the current government. We have not heard from the government how it plans to implement any of the recommendations from the Arar commission in any meaningful sense.

I wish the government would just allow the bill to go back to committee at this point and start over, because, frankly, the government botched it and we need to have another go at it.

• (1655)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, do we all agree that the protection of civil liberties and public safety are two fundamental Canadian values that are not a suggestion or something on which we can compromise? They are both necessary.

Too often, the current government asks us to choose between civil liberties and stronger public security. Too often, we are being asked to choose between economic development and the environment. We should not have to make those choices. We should be able to accommodate both values that we cherish and with which we work to progress.

What does my colleague think about that? Is it not time to stop pitting these values against each other? Could we not simply establish that both of these values must be present when bills are introduced and worked on in the House?

Mr. Philip Toone: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for Québec for her question. I think she is absolutely right. This is not about balance. This is about two rights, two obligations that need to be respected.

Bills have to pass the test and justify themselves as laws in a free and democratic society. Unfortunately, I do not think that the bill before us passes that test. It should have been debated more thoroughly and improved in committee.

It is unfortunate that the government is in such a hurry to pass a bill that does not respect the rights and freedoms of Canadians or of parliamentarians, who have to ensure that all bills stand up to scrutiny.

As we all know, governments are supposed to ensure that their bills are constitutional. Unfortunately, in this case, perhaps the government's lawyers provided bad advice or made a mistake. Frankly, this bill does not deserve our support.

I hope that the Conservative Party members will take the time to read this bill closely so they can see how harmful it is in terms of taking rights away from Canadians, who do not deserve this.

Government Orders

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today to speak to Bill C-44, an act to amend the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act, concerning the much talked-about CSIS.

This bill makes three important changes regarding the Canadian Security Intelligence Service. First of all, it clarifies CSIS's legal authority to conduct security intelligence operations outside our borders in order to address threats to Canadian security. Second, it confirms the jurisdiction of the Federal Court to issue warrants that have effect outside Canada. Finally, it ensures greater protection during legal proceedings for human sources that provide information to CSIS.

Before looking at the specific provisions in Bill C-44, it is important to put the bill into context. The Conservatives had already planned to introduce Bill C-44 before the events that took place in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu on October 20 and of course before the events that we all remember and that took place here in Ottawa on October 22.

As we have done in the wake of other tragic incidents, we need to carefully examine legislation and security procedures to ensure that they are adequate, while making sure that our civil liberties are protected.

The government claims this bill is intended to modernize the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, pointing to the fact the CSIS Act has not been amended since CSIS was created. In 1984, Parliament passed legislation to create a civilian security intelligence service. This legislation not only gave rise to the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, it also gave CSIS the mandate to gather intelligence on threats to Canada's security. CSIS provides that intelligence to the government so that it may put in place the necessary measures. Now, 30 years after its creation, CSIS is not the same organization it was in 1984. As it celebrates its 30th anniversary, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service is concerned about its rapid expansion and the increase in missions abroad.

The government says that C-44 will allow CSIS to act abroad to improve the effectiveness of its investigations into threats to Canada's security. For many years, it was assumed that CSIS's security intelligence mandate was not limited to operations in Canadian territory, because the enabling legislation makes reference to threats to the security of Canada that originate from both inside and outside the country.

In fact, CSIS has been conducting intelligence operations abroad by using a loophole in the CSIS Act regarding what constitutes Canadian soil and a section of the Act which allows CSIS to provide technical assistance to the Department of Foreign Affairs and the Department of National Defence.

Another important part of this bill deals with protection for our sources and informants abroad. We would have appreciated receiving more detailed information to determine how this protection will be provided. Legal experts have expressed their concerns about the fact that it will be more difficult from this point forward to examine CSIS evidence in criminal cases in particular. This could create an obstacle to the successful prosecution of those involved in national security threats. The ability of an accused to confront their

accuser and to test the evidence in a court is a fundamental part of Canadian criminal law.

It is not appropriate or constitutional to considerably expand the powers of a civilian intelligence agency without having a debate, here in the House, and considering the advice of the many experts who are concerned about the changes that will be made by Bill C-44.

The recommendations of the 2006 Maher Arar commission of inquiry called for new accountability measures for Canada's intelligence agencies. However, eight years later, these have yet to be implemented.

• (1700)

At their annual meeting, the Privacy Commissioner of Canada and the Information Commissioner of Canada called on the federal government to ensure that effective oversight was included in any legislative measure that would grant new powers to intelligence and law enforcement agencies.

Mr. Daniel Therrien, the Privacy Commissioner, said that it was understandable that the government would want to consider boosting the powers of law enforcement and national security agencies to address potential gaps, but that any new tools should be accompanied by a beefed-up role for the watchdogs who keep an eye on spies and police.

This is why it is very important, before increasing powers for CSIS, to create oversight mechanisms. At this point, there is no mechanism in place to act as watchdog and provide oversight for our intelligence agencies. Claiming that there is, as the government is doing, is simply dishonest.

In the 2012 budget, the Conservatives abolished the position of Inspector General of CSIS. He took care of internal oversight by ensuring that all the work of the agency was in conformity with the law. To find the balance between national security, civil liberties, and individual rights and freedoms in Canada, the government should be bringing in accompanying legislation that provides that parliamentary oversight. On the one hand, it would ensure that the agencies are doing their jobs, and on the other, it would ensure they are not going too far and violating the civil liberties of Canadians.

The Conservatives are cutting funding for public safety agencies by a significant amount over three consecutive years, for a total of \$687.9 million by 2015. The CSIS budget is being cut by \$24.5 million in 2015, while the position of CSIS Inspector General was abolished in the 2012 budget.

We are concerned about the impact the cuts will have on the government's ability to exercise adequate oversight over these agencies. If the Conservatives want to ensure that Canadians are protected, they should review the resources available to public safety agencies, such as CSIS, after three consecutive years of budget cuts.

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Protecting civil liberties and public safety are both core Canadian values. As I mentioned earlier, these are two essential obligations. They are not suggestions or compromises. New Democrats want legislation that improves public safety and strengthens our civil liberties. We also want a real debate. The government rejected all of the amendments the NDP proposed to improve Bill C-44 and did not provide any real reason.

In conclusion, I want to share a quote from the Information Commissioner of Canada and the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, who addressed the tragic events that took place in Quebec and in Ottawa. They called on us:

To adopt an evidence-based approach as to the need for any new legislative proposal granting additional powers for intelligence and law enforcement agencies; to engage Canadians in an open and transparent dialogue on whether new measures are required, and if so, on their nature, scope, and impact on rights and freedoms; to ensure that effective oversight be included in any legislation establishing additional powers for intelligence and law enforcement agencies.

We have talked a lot today about public safety. As I said, there are a number of Canadian values that we must honour in this Parliament.

• (1705)

I urge the government to consider these values and to ensure that civil liberties will be respected as much as public safety. We cannot make compromises.

Unfortunately, I am disappointed that the amendments proposed by experts who work in the area and who are familiar with the situation were not incorporated into the bill.

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague said that this bill is about civil liberties and national security, two very important issues.

However, to my utter dismay, I learned earlier that committee had only four hours to hear witnesses, including two hours for the minister and the department. That left only two hours for other witnesses.

Does my colleague feel that is sufficient for such a sweeping bill?

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, that is an excellent question from the hon. member for Hochelaga.

We have no time, in committee or in the House, to debate and find common ground for everyone here and for Canadians. I find it regrettable that the government uses so many gag orders. It is a game to them. Debate is cut short and bills move from one stage to the next. It is really unfortunate because we are unable to delve into the details.

The impact of cuts to public safety organizations can be felt in each of our ridings. I am disappointed that we cannot look at the details and talk about specific examples. Again, there are experts on the ground who know what the needs are. We need to listen to them so that we know which priorities cannot be compromised. Budget cuts are one thing, but we cannot skimp on the essentials.

• (1710)

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her speech.

She spoke about public safety as well as rights and protection of civil liberties. On October 28, the Prime Minister said this:

Canadians do not have effective rights unless we can ensure their security...

Would the hon. member like to comment on the Prime Minister's remarks?

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, we have a Prime Minister who focuses far too much on security.

We talk constantly about public safety here in the House of Commons. Granted, it is an issue, but it is not the only one. I would like it if we could talk more about economic development, about our small and medium-sized businesses and our great tourism industry, which unfortunately is being cut by the Conservatives. Tourism benefits every one of our ridings. I would like these matters to be debated in the House and more bills to be introduced on this issue.

Public safety is important but we talk for too much about it. We should be talking about the environment, economic development and other issues, rather than being obsessed with public safety. I read in the *Hill Times* that terrorism and security are two of the three issues that Canadians are starting to become tired of. I would suggest that we discuss it in small doses.

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech, her eloquence and her passion.

One has to be passionate to be the Member of Parliament for Québec, so I congratulate her on defending her points of view loud and clear. During the incident last October, I was in my riding. That was of great concern to my constituents, who wondered where we were and what was going on. We cannot deny that security is important, whether it be on Parliament Hill or somewhere else in Canada. However, as our national anthem says, we need to keep our land not only strong, but free.

Could my colleague tell us whether Bill C-44 has reached that balance?

Ms. Annick Papillon: Mr. Speaker, that is, in fact, the problem with this bill.

At this point, as it is currently worded, as all the NDP amendments have been rejected, the problem with this bill is that it does not balance civil liberties with strengthening national security. Things could get seriously out of hand and that worries me. This is why I am encouraging this government to take another look at these amendments and give them some consideration.

[English]

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is always an honour to speak in the House on behalf of my constituents from Surrey North. This is an important bill that we are debating today. Bill C-44 amends the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act and other acts.

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I remember getting up in the House during second reading of the bill. I actually supported it at second reading, along with other members. We were hoping that the government would allocate proper debate on the bill in committee and allow for very detailed scrutiny of some of the changes being proposed. It is a very serious matter. When we are dealing with public safety and civil liberties, we need to ensure that all angles are looked at so that any bills or laws passed in the House take into consideration those two core Canadian values of public safety and civil liberties.

What did we see from the government? I was hoping it would entertain some of the expert testimony. We had four hours on the bill at committee. Two of those hours were taken by the members of the staff and two hours were allocated for so-called scrutiny. That is not acceptable to Canadians. They expect us to scrutinize and to look through bills for any holes, to ensure that we thoroughly go through important bills that increase the powers of our spy agencies. That was not done.

We had two hours. There were a number of amendments introduced at committee stage. I have seen this movie before where we come up with some insight and some amendments that would improve a bill and the Conservatives somehow do not want to see any changes, whether from the NDP, the Liberals, or anyone else. I have seen this over the last three and a half years. Surely, of the thousands of amendments we have offered as suggestions to improve bills, the Conservatives would accept some. No, not even one has been accepted. If it is really straightforward, they may entertain it, but they do not want to see any suggestions by the opposition to improve any of the bills.

In this case, the government did not accept any of the amendments we had proposed. Basically, Bill C-44 is making significant changes to expand the powers of CSIS, but instead of giving the bill the careful study it deserved, it was rammed through in four hours. That is not enough time. Giving CSIS new powers without providing adequate oversight presents real dangers; rather than clarifying things, this will only lead to more legal problems and may ultimately be struck down by the courts.

We have seen this movie before too. There are many bills passed by the government that have been struck down by the Supreme Court. It seems to be a regular occurrence where things are rushed through the House without proper oversight or debate. Whether it is in the House or committee, we are forced to rush. We have had over 84 closures on a number of bills that have been rammed through the House. Closure basically shuts down debate. That is not what Canadians expect us to do; they expect us to debate in the House.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, I know they are chirping because they do not want to hear the truth. They do not want to hear the facts.

• (1715)

People in my constituency expect me to bring their views to the House. Those members can talk as much as they want, but they are not going to stop this member from speaking for his constituents.

What are some of the things we need? I feel strongly about the need for strong civilian oversight. It is critical that enhanced civilian

oversight accompany any new powers that we give CSIS. The Security Intelligence Review Committee, SIRC, does not have the powers necessary to properly oversee CSIS, and the Conservatives used an omnibus bill in 2012 to eliminate the position of inspector general at CSIS.

Let me give the House a bit of history as to where we are and where we need to go.

Bill C-44 proposes to modernize CSIS and provide additional powers to the organization. However, there are no proposed improvements to the oversight that is desperately needed in the modernization of the service. Recommendations were made in 2006 by the Maher Arar commission of inquiry calling for new accountability measures for Canada's intelligence agency. Eight years later those recommendations have yet to be put in place by the government.

The Conservatives talk about protecting public safety and civil liberties, but when it comes time to deliver on some of these public safety issues, such as civil liberties for Canadians, time after time the Conservatives have failed to deliver. This was another opportunity to bring in more transparency, accountability and oversight of our intelligence community, but again the Conservatives have failed.

The privacy and information commissioners of Canada at their annual meeting asked the government to ensure that effective oversight be included in any legislation that would establish additional powers for intelligence and law enforcement. I am not making this up. I will quote the privacy and information commissioners of Canada: "We acknowledge that security is essential to maintaining our democratic rights..." All of us in the House would agree with that, and I would say that 99% of Canadians would agree with that as well, but, they continued, "At the same time, the response to such events must be measured and proportionate, and crafted so as to preserve our democratic values." That is where the government has failed.

Daniel Therrien, the Privacy Commissioner, also said that it was understandable that the government would want to consider boosting the powers of law enforcement and national security agencies to address potential gaps, but that any new tools should be accompanied by a beefed-up role for the watchdogs who keep an eye on spies and police.

To me, it is not either/or. To me, it is pretty clear if additional powers are to be granted to our spy agency.

Six years ago we heard calls for proper oversight but that is not proposed in this legislation. Here, I could go on and on about this legislation, about the lack of oversight, the lack of commitment by the Conservatives to ensuring the protection of Canadians and civil liberties.

I will be voting against this particular legislation. The Conservatives had an opportunity to make improvements, but have failed again.

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• (1720)

Mr. Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP has such a strange way of showing different priorities. Those members would rather bring in a registry for law-abiding farmers, hunters, and sportsmen than tracking terrorists.

Could the member please explain to me why that is more of a priority than giving tools to our RCMP and our law enforcement officers so they can do their jobs and track these terrorists down?

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, here are the facts, which the Conservatives actually do not like.

This is providing resources to our security agency. What have the Conservatives done? They have actually cut the funding for these organizations that provide for the security and safety of Canadians. This is what the Conservatives have done. I know these are facts. This is taken from the ministry of Public Safety. The Conservatives have been cutting funding for our public safety programs for three years now, for a total of \$687.9 million by 2015. There are ongoing cuts. For CSIS, it is \$24 million by 2015.

How is the government planning to protect Canadians and provide resources to these agencies if it is cutting their funds?

I thank the member for his question.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in a bill that talks about civil liberties, there are opportunities for civil liberties to be breached. It is possible.

Does my colleague think it is logical that the Privacy Commissioner has not even been invited to appear before the committee? Could this be because he said that any new tool must be accompanied by an enhanced role for the watchdogs who keep an eye on spies and the police? Are the Conservatives afraid of this?

[*English*]

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt.

The Conservatives rammed this bill through the committee. It would have been nice to hear the Privacy Commissioner. He stated his position. He basically said that any new tools should be accompanied by a beefed-up role for the watchdogs who keep an eye on these spy and police agencies.

I do not think the Conservatives wanted to hear this in committee. The commissioner has been very clear, as have a number of inquiries looking into some of the lapses over the years. Unfortunately, Conservatives do not want to hear these kinds of issues about civil liberties and protecting Canadians' rights.

• (1725)

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his eloquent speech and his knowledge of the matter.

We know that the public feels it is the government's duty to protect both public security and civil liberties.

However, we see that, in terms of this bill, the government has chosen to ignore all of the amendments that the official opposition

put forward in order to improve the bill and to prevent costly legal wrangling. I would like to hear my colleague's views on this issue.

[*English*]

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu: Mr. Speaker, protecting civil liberties and public safety are both Canadian core values. We can do both. They are not either-or propositions. I think we can do both at the same time. I know the Conservatives have trouble doing that.

As parliamentarians, people send us to this House in Ottawa to scrutinize the bills being passed by the government. We had an opportunity to listen to the witnesses. We could have brought in more witnesses, but this bill was actually rammed through the committee in only four hours. Two of those hours were for the ministerial staff. There was no opportunity to properly look at the bill and some of the implications of the changes being offered by the government.

Time after time we have seen time allocation in this House and legislation being rammed through at the committee stage. That is not what Canadians expect from us. They expect much better.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure to rise today to speak to Bill C-44, an act to amend the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act and other acts. It is always a pleasure to stand in the House and represent the voices from the riding of Newton—North Delta.

I want to get something on the table right at the beginning. There is no one on this side of the House who supports terrorists or any acts of terrorism. Before my friends across the way start to have conversations and yell things, I wanted to make that clear. All of my life I have worked for peace. I am a mother. I am a grandmother. I have been a teacher for most of my life, and I can say that I abhor acts of violence.

Occasionally members are accused of liking terrorists, but those kinds of things do not help us when we debate in the House.

I want to talk about the substance of this bill today. First, I supported this bill at second reading. Why? It was because New Democrats, like everyone else in the House, want measures that will enhance public safety. It is because of this that we supported this bill at second reading, and it went to committee. Once it got to committee, the government repeated the same mistakes it makes over and over again. It limited hearings.

When there is such critical legislation that has not been debated or had any changes for decades, some major changes need to be made. The committee needed to hear from witnesses. As much as we all like to think we are experts on everything, there are great experts out there we need to hear from who know far more about public safety than we do. They know what works. They have evidence of what works in other jurisdictions and of what would be good in Canada. Our job is to listen to it.

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Two hours to hear from officials from the department was fair enough, but two hours for all other witnesses was just unacceptable. I can assure the House that when trying to address public safety in a serious way, the government once again used the hammer of its majority to push through legislation without giving it the due process and oversight it needed. I do not hesitate in opposing this legislation any more because of what happened at committee.

Hon. Gary Goodyear: Surprise, surprise, predictable.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, my colleague across the way says, “Surprise, surprise”. I am surprised that when it came to the critical issue of public safety, the members of the government cut off debate and did not accept amendments that were very reasonable and well informed and that actually would have improved this legislation, but no, the government knows everything and does not need to hear from anyone else, because it is its way or the highway. That is the way it brought the legislation forward.

The Conservatives are then surprised when opposition members stand and say that there are flaws in this legislation that need to be addressed.

New Democrats never give up. We will keep trying to improve this legislation and will hope that the government will wake up one day and realize that there is a different way of doing things if it is really serious. We are really serious.

What would Bill C-44 do? It would make significant changes to expand CSIS's powers, but instead of giving this bill the careful study it deserved, once again the government did not feel the need to hear from experts. It knew what it wanted to do. It is its way or the highway. Independent experts and other witnesses were ignored.

● (1730)

The bill would give powers to CSIS without providing adequate oversight, and it presents real dangers. I fear that the government is going to end up spending taxpayers' hard-earned money fighting more legal problems and having this legislation stuck in court. However, the government does not seem to mind doing that. It would rather pay the money to the courts than provide services and good legislation to Canadians.

Even the witnesses who appeared put forward recommendations and suggestions. They were ignored.

This bill is fundamentally flawed. It is going to be very hard to support. What would we have wanted to see? We should always say what it is we want to see in legislation. I can point to lots of things that are wrong with the bill. What I wanted to see in the legislation that is not there is strong civilian oversight. It is critical that enhanced civilian oversight accompany any new powers for CSIS.

Everyone knows that the Security Intelligence Review Committee does not have the powers necessary to properly oversee CSIS. The Conservatives used an omnibus budget bill in 2012 to eliminate the position of CSIS's inspector general. Once again, anyone who questions anything the government does is deleted and the government gets rid of the position.

Something else the bill needs and that we want to see in it is strong protection of civil liberties. Some people say that we have to

choose between public safety and civil liberties. I say that this is a false dichotomy. To have good public safety, we need to have protection of civil liberties. To have protection of civil liberties, we need to ensure that we have strong public safety. They are both core Canadian values, and Canadians do not have to choose A or B. It is possible to have both, and once again, the government failed to address that. There are no trade-offs here. It is not one or the other. We can have both, and that is what needs to be in this bill. We, as New Democrats, want legislation that both improves security and reinforces our civil liberties. That is essential.

My colleagues across the way always talk a good game. All the rhetoric is there. However, it is also a party that keeps cutting resources. It wants to have all these enhancements, but it has cut funding for our public safety agencies for three straight years, for a total of almost \$688 million by 2015. That is not a figure I have made up. That is a figure the government can verify.

How can the government say it wants to make improvements yet at the same time take millions of dollars in resources out of the CSIS budget? CSIS will face ongoing cuts of \$24.5 million by 2015, while budget 2012 scrapped the CSIS inspector general position altogether. At the same time we have this rhetoric that the government is going to make everyone safer and that public safety is going to improve, it is taking away the tools and resources our agencies need to do that. As with many other things, it is all talk. When it comes to what the government actually does, it underfunds, it cuts, or it just does not spend the money, even when it allocates it to certain programs.

A myriad of validators absolutely support the position we are taking as the NDP. I wish I had time to read all of them into the record, but I know I am short of time.

Let me say that this legislation can be fixed to get our support. First, put strong civilian oversight in place. Second, put in protection for civil liberties. Third, let us give them the resources and get the job done.

● (1735)

Mr. Dave MacKenzie (Oxford, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member opposite saying that she abhors terrorism and acts of violence. On this point, we could not agree more.

For that reason, will the member call on the member for Scarborough—Rouge River to apologize for her comment, comparing a day celebrating Tamil Tiger terrorists to our solemn Canadian occasion of Remembrance Day. These comments were shameful and must be retracted.

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, every member on this side of the House abhors violence and acts of terrorism—every member.

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[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech, her passion and her commitment to her family and her community in her riding.

She very clearly mentioned that all of this is reflected in her deep beliefs, as it is a matter of ensuring the safety of the community and of all Canadians and of being engaged within our communities. It is also a matter of ensuring this balance among all the values that we hold dear, that consist of keeping our land not only strong, but free.

However, how is all this reflected in the member's very diverse riding? How do her constituents feel about the importance of public safety and the protection of rights and freedoms?

• (1740)

[*English*]

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for the very thoughtful question that she asked about my community of Surrey, Newton and North Delta. She is absolutely right. I live in a beautiful Canadian mosaic of a riding. It is very diverse and very concerned about public safety.

On Saturday, we had another meeting with the RCMP and the members of our community, including the members from the masjid, the representatives from the BC Muslim Association, the local mufti, and other communities leaders and service providers, to talk about the kinds of things we need to do in our community to tackle the issue of radicalization.

What came through was a real will on the part of the Muslim community in my riding that we need to tackle this. However, at the same time, what also came through was the fear that is instilled in many of them. Every time they hear of a bombing or a shooting, immediately there is a sort of frozen second when it happens and their hope that it is not anybody associated with the Muslim faith. They are scared of all the repercussion in the community.

We have been working on this on an ongoing basis. What we are really talking about is how to provide resources and support for our kids, and how to build safe and inclusive communities in such a way as to prevent any windows of opportunity for radicalization of youth.

I can assure the House that every one of those members abhors any acts of terrorism. They are Canadians. They live here and they want to do their part, but they are also telling me that they are distressed at having fingers pointed at them all the time.

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very happy to rise in the House today to speak to Bill C-44, especially after my colleagues have been speaking very eloquently with respect to the concerns we have with the bill. As I was reading through the notes on the bill, it struck me that it is a similar pattern to one we experienced on Bill C-2, which was also before the public safety committee very recently, having to do with safe consumption sites.

The bill was only approved at second reading on November 18. Here we are in early December, and already we are at report stage. That means the bill was rushed through the House and it was then rushed through the committee. In fact, there were three committee meetings. Witness testimony happened over two days, and then there

was clause-by-clause study at the third meeting. We have to remember that committee hearings are only two hours. We basically had four hours of testimony from witnesses and one meeting of clause-by-clause consideration.

I want us to stop and think about that.

What has happened to the legislative process in Parliament is really quite shocking. I do remember the days when a bill would have adequate debate in the House. When a bill went to committee, it was considered a very serious proposition. We might hear witnesses for a couple of weeks, over several meetings.

I know that you, Mr. Speaker, would remember. You were part of the justice committee and a very able representative for the NDP. I know you dealt with umpteen bills. Even when you were dealing with them, they were being rushed through. However, prior to that, there was a sense that as parliamentarians, as legislators, we were doing our job and we were really examining a bill.

Now we have come to this place where the attitude and the pattern of operation is to basically rush everything through, and if we dare to criticize and say that something needs a little more time, then we are told we are holding something up, that we are doing it for political reasons.

However, these are very significant bills that we debate. This one in particular has to do with the powers of CSIS. This is an organization that Canadians read about from time to time when something might come forward in terms of a particular case or situation. However, basically Canadians have very little knowledge about CSIS and how it operates, other than individuals who may have had direct contact with the organization because they were being investigated in some way.

When we look at the modernization of CSIS, and we understand that is what the bill is meant to be about, that is certainly very important. After 30 years, there is no question that it needs to be modernized. However, it does require full scrutiny. It absolutely requires full scrutiny by members of Parliament, by a committee, and by the witnesses who are called to committee.

It is shocking that of all the amendments that were put forward—I believe the NDP put forward 12, the Liberals put forward 5, and the Green Party put forward 6—as was similar to Bill C-2, none were approved. Not one.

I think we have a very serious situation. We have a majority government that basically calls the shots and does not even pretend to be interested in a legislative process and examining a bill as to whether it might be improved upon, or whether there are legitimate criticisms, flaws in a bill. In fact, what is concerning about the bill is that, as we have heard with other bills that have been before the House, if it goes through in its current form, it too may end up in some kind of constitutional challenge. Again, it is a pattern that is emerging.

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I did want to put that on the record because it worries me. We come to work here to represent our constituents. We come into the House to participate in a process in good faith, but we find out that the process has been completely jiggled. There is no space, no room, no engagement, to have a constructive review of an important piece of legislation. That bothers me.

• (1745)

In my riding of Vancouver East, I was at a very important gathering of aboriginal people, who were speaking about the missing and murdered aboriginal women and the need for a national inquiry. We think of the impact of that issue in terms of public safety, and yet we see very little movement from the government on the issue. We see a bill being rushed through here that would also have an impact on public safety and an impact on the public interest, and we see virtually no debate. It is a very sad day.

As many of my colleagues have pointed out in the debate at report stage today, the NDP did support this bill at second reading. New Democrats actually agreed that it should go to committee, that we should take a look at it. We worked diligently at committee, and I certainly want to congratulate my colleagues on the committee who brought forward the amendments. It takes a lot of time to bring forward amendments. They heard the witnesses. The witnesses themselves made a number of suggestions to improve the modernization of CSIS. With any expansion of powers, the most critical thing is to ensure that there is proper oversight.

We can go back as far as the Maher Arar commission, which surely is one of the pivotal moments in Canadian political history in terms of security. I was in the House when that travesty took place, trying to understand what happened to Maher Arar and calling for a national inquiry. Of course, that finally did happen and the recommendations of the commission of inquiry came out in 2006. I wonder what happened to those recommendations. In fact, we know that the inquiry called for a number of recommendations and urgently pointed out that measures needed to be put in place to have oversight of Canada's intelligence agencies. That was eight years ago. No one can forget the Maher Arar inquiry. No one can forget what happened to that Canadian, and the hell that he went through. If we have learned anything, surely it is an examination of our own intelligence procedures and methodologies. We have to live up to the recommendations of the commission of inquiry, and yet they have not been implemented. How awful is that?

Here we are with another bill that would change the way that CSIS operates overseas, and yet we have not addressed the fundamental question with CSIS that has been pointed out to us again and again, which is the need for proper oversight. We hear this, as well, from the privacy and information commissions of Canada. These are folks who need to be paid attention to. These are folks who pay close attention to privacy and information in Canada, and they know the balance on what is required in terms of privacy and information, yet at their annual meeting, they also brought forward the need to have effective oversight included in any legislation established for any additional powers for intelligence and law enforcement agencies. Where is it? Why are we dealing with this bill in isolation?

Now we are at report stage, and suffice it to say that New Democrats will be opposing this bill because the oversight has not

been brought in. The Security Intelligence Review Committee, which has ended up being a part-time committee, is not adequate. We have seen that the position of inspector general of CSIS was eliminated in 2012, so even the internal monitoring of CSIS has greatly diminished. We are in a bad state of affairs.

We want to ensure that if there is any expansion of CSIS, that it be done by protecting civil liberties and it be done with proper oversight. This bill would do neither, and therefore it deserves to be voted down. There should be a proper examination that takes place.

• (1750)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are debating an important bill that could have a major impact on a lot of people, especially in terms of civil liberties. My colleague said that the Conservatives were not interested in a constructive debate and that they were not taking things seriously. She did not say it, but it seems that all they want to do is impose their way of thinking. When I heard her say that, it occurred to me right away that only one Conservative member had spoken, and that was the minister, who did not have a choice because it is his bill. There was also one Liberal member who spoke. It seems as though this is not being taken seriously in the House of Commons.

I am really disappointed about that, and I would like to know what my colleague thinks.

[*English*]

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for her perception. All I can say is thank God there are NDP members in the House who are willing to make sure that this debate takes place and that at least there is some public airing.

Our responsibility is to go through bills and to hold the government to account. We are the official opposition. We believe there is meant to be other opposition too, but apparently on this bill it has somehow gone silent. It is quite astounding that we have only had one government member and one Liberal member speak to this bill. What is with that? Why are we not going through this bill and debating it properly at report stage? Why are we not taking note of what happened at committee and thinking about what those witnesses said and why that was not reflected in an amended bill?

What does report stage even mean any more? Amendments come forward and are just summarily thrown out because, as my colleague has said, the government wants to impose its view of things. She is entirely correct in her assessment, and it is a very unfortunate day for Parliament.

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. colleague if she agrees with something one of the witnesses said in the session that I happened to attend. In fact, there were only two witness sessions, and I was there for one as a substitute. Professor Forcese, from the University of Ottawa, talked about the fact that warrants are now required for overseas activities, but no standards are written into the legislation. He said that the standards would have to make sense in order for the courts to interpret them.

Government Orders

He stated:

I also believe the amendments may be interpreted as requiring a warrant any time an operation may violate international or foreign law. These would be sensible standards....

Our critic from Esquimalt—Juan de Fuca had an amendment ready that said:

For greater certainty, a warrant under this section is required for any investigation outside of Canada that

(a) involves an investigative activity that, were it conducted inside Canada, would require a warrant by reason of the Canadian Charter...or

(b) may be inconsistent with international law or the law of the foreign state in which the investigative activity is conducted.

He did not move it because a similar amendment had already been moved by one of the other opposition members.

I am wondering if my colleague would agree with me that “For greater certainty...” would have been a very good amendment to accept, but at the same time those are eminently sensible standards that we would expect the courts to interpret into the law to ensure that those are the standards applied when warrants are sought.

● (1755)

Ms. Libby Davies: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comment and the very specific attention to detail that the member for Toronto—Danforth has brought forward. It serves as a good example of how some committee members do due diligence. We listen to witnesses and the suggestions they put forward. They are often experts, and my colleague has named one here.

Then we put forward amendments, but they just do not seem to mean anything anymore. What we end up with is a bill that has very broad powers, has extraordinary generality, and raises the possibility that either it will be challenged or that those powers will be abused. That is the problem, and that is what we are here to protect against. Unfortunately, when they are overruled by a majority in the House, those protections do not exist anymore.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to join my colleagues in debating a bill on a very important subject. This bill would modernize the Canadian Security Intelligence Service for the purpose of increasing its powers.

However, as several of my colleagues pointed out, adopting the bill as written could have very serious consequences for our citizens and change the way things are done in this country. This bill is deeply flawed, and it is unconstitutional.

That being the case, it is impossible for me and the rest of my colleagues to support such a fundamentally flawed bill. We had hoped for a more co-operative approach in committee so that we could amend the more problematic elements and ensure that the bill truly met Canada's needs. However, the Conservatives exhibited their usual rigidity and dogmatic blindness and flatly rejected all of the good amendments that were proposed. That is how we ended up with the flawed document before us today.

In short, Bill C-44 proposes three major changes to the powers of CSIS. It clarifies the legal authority of CSIS to conduct operations abroad. It is basically a legal confirmation of what is already being

done. It confirms the jurisdiction of the Federal Court to issue warrants that have effect outside Canada and it makes changes to the protection of the identity of CSIS human intelligence sources in judicial proceedings. In other words, the proposed changes will significantly increase CSIS's powers.

However, as per the criticisms my colleagues have expressed here in the House, this bill does not contain any provisions to strengthen civilian oversight of CSIS even though that is an essential principle that should be defended by all members of the House, regardless of what party they belong to. Nevertheless, we have heard very little from the Liberals and I have a hard time imagining that a Conservative backbencher would question a measure presented by the eloquent Minister of Public Safety or any other Conservative frontbencher.

Any new power bestowed on an oversight body such as CSIS must be accompanied by increased civilian oversight. That is very simple, but such oversight offers better protection for Canadians. We understand that the role of CSIS is to try to protect Canadians through its various activities, but we also have a responsibility as parliamentarians to protect Canadians from various invasions of their privacy. This bill seems to completely ignore that responsibility, which is nevertheless an integral part of our mandate.

Right now, the Security Intelligence Review Committee serves as the oversight body for CSIS. The members of this committee work part time, are unelected and are appointed by the Prime Minister. Since we know how he appoints senators, we all have reason to be concerned.

The interim chair used to be a Reform MP, which does not really inspire confidence either. What is more, two of the five seats on this committee are vacant. This committee is clearly deficient and needs to be improved, but there is no mention of that in Bill C-44.

Furthermore, in the Conservative budget 2012, they eliminated the position of inspector general of CSIS. The individual in that position was responsible for the internal oversight of CSIS, ensuring that the service's activities complied with the law. Now all we have is a puppet review committee that can be stacked with whoever the governing party wants. Past appointments to the position of chair of that committee have been less than inspiring.

● (1800)

Consider, for example, Arthur Porter and Chuck Strahl. Those names are not associated with generally commendable actions. However, that is the kind of committee that is currently overseeing CSIS's activities. The Conservatives want to give it even greater powers, but have no interest in addressing the problems that exist within the review committee.

We in the NDP have a serious problem with that. We take our duty to protect Canadians' civil liberties very seriously, but that unfortunately does not appear to be the case for the other parties of this House. We proposed a number of amendments in committee to try to strengthen the civilian oversight of CSIS, but as usual, the Conservatives unfortunately would not listen.

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In fact, it is far worse: they ignored all the amendments presented even though they were all justified. Experts submitted their evidence in committee even though they were given very little time. They suggested to the government different ways to ensure that the legislation is constitutional and that the civil liberties of Canadians are protected. The Conservatives believe that because they have been elected and have a majority, they do not have to do anything with the proposals, even though they are based on many years of experience and research in the area. They tell themselves that they know better. They presented the current bill before us and chose to completely ignore any piece of advice that ran counter to their ideas.

Quite frankly, I have trouble understanding this attitude. We see it at every committee and in every parliamentary debate. I have lost track of the number of time allocation motions that have been introduced in the House and the number of in camera committee meetings where we were unable to make various submissions, even in respect to the witnesses that were to appear before a committee. It is quite difficult for opposition parties to make sure certain of their witnesses are heard in committee, just because the government is somewhat of a control freak. If someone knows the right French term, let me know.

Nevertheless, that is the context we are working in and it is frankly too bad, especially when we are dealing with a bill as important as Bill C-44. We all agree that we have to take measures to protect Canadians and fight terrorism, both abroad and at home. I talk to the people in my riding and they are concerned about what is happening in the world and what is happening here at home. Nonetheless, they also still want to live under the rule of law, as we do now. These laws are being eroded all the time under the current government. Still, everyone in the country is concerned about this. The government should listen to these concerns and take them into account. This should be reflected in one way or another in the bills it introduces in the House.

When expert witnesses are given just four hours in committee hearings, the various opinions of Canadian citizens are not being taken into consideration. These witnesses know the subject matter and care deeply for the common good of their fellow citizens. The government completely ignored these testimonies when it could have benefited from them. It might have saved itself a tremendous amount in legal fees. Those are coming.

In any event, the Conservatives do not seem to be particularly concerned about this. They found a way to balance the budget. They will simply not spend the money that is allocated for veterans or others, which will leave more money to cover the legal fees when various bills are challenged. I am thinking about their prostitution bill, or Bill C-44, which will inevitably end up before the courts. This awareness does not seem to be part of the Conservative mindset, and that is too bad.

One of the NDP's main concerns is protecting Canadians' civil liberties while guaranteeing their safety. That was our focus when we worked on Bill C-44 in committee and that will continue to be the focus of our work in the House. We tried to improve the bill. Now we will have to see what happens in court. In fact, I think that is where we will end up. I think it is unfortunate that we have to deal with such an attitude. I cannot say it enough.

• (1805)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I could not help but notice that the member, or the former member, might have been a little upset that perhaps there had been one speaker from the Liberal Party, which is not true. She also expressed concern as to why the Liberal Party might not be concerned about oversight. Again, that is just not true. I have raised the issue on several occasions.

Oversight has consistently been an issue. We have been advocating for that for a long time now. One of the ways we can provide oversight to CSIS is through Parliament. We are one of the Five Eyes countries, and the only one that does not have parliamentary oversight, where the politicians provide oversight. Having a parliamentary oversight committee would go a long way in ensuring more accountability and providing assurances to Canadians.

Could my friend from the NDP benches expand on why she would possibly support what we and other stakeholders have been suggesting, which is for a parliamentary oversight committee to deal with issues such as ISIS?

[Translation]

Ms. Éline Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I thank my Liberal colleague for his question.

I am very happy to hear him speak on behalf of his colleagues in favour of civilian oversight at CSIS. It would have been nice to hear more Liberal members say so today in the House. I think it is too bad to see this member rise and speak on behalf of all of his colleagues. There is time allocated for debate in the House, and that is the time to rise.

As for the rest, the NDP has stressed the importance of increased oversight at CSIS, and we are working to achieve this. We need to ensure that there is oversight, whether it is by parliamentarians or civilians. As I mentioned earlier, we tried to increase the existing civilian oversight in committee, more specifically with respect to the qualifications of the members on the oversight committee.

There are different things we could do now to improve oversight, without necessarily creating another committee. That is something to look at, of course. I am always open to debate. That is what the House is for—debating.

However, the most important issue for us is that we want to increase civilian oversight of CSIS.

• (1810)

[English]

Mr. Erin O'Toole (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, sometimes I am surprised that the NDP often takes positions that are so radically detached from reality and the public security and safety environment in which we live.

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In fact, the hon. member has Valcartier in her riding, the proud Canadian Forces base. For over 12 years, the men and women from that base saw the face of terrorism in Afghanistan. No doubt some people who are serving Canada right now have come through that base and are seeing it in other parts of the world.

Bill C-44 is intended to provide for security and keep Canada safe from some of these global networks that would do us harm.

In the case of Bill C-44, when the Canadian public is quite accustomed to protection being given to law enforcement sources, why would we not extend that same protection to sources that provide information and intelligence on national security? It would keep our men and women in uniform safe.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Éline Michaud: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to know that my colleague knows where my riding is and which military base is there. My grandfather served there. I come from a military family, so I clearly understand about the service and the sacrifices that the members of our Canadian Forces are asked to make. Wanting to protect them is one of my priorities.

On the other hand, when we listen to this government, we cannot just talk about protection and the importance of security agencies. We must ensure that they are given the resources they need to carry out their mandate. When we look into what the Conservatives have done since they came into power, we note that in the 2012-2013 fiscal year, CSIS had to reduce its budget by \$15 million. This year, from now until 2015, their budget will be cut by \$24.5 million. That is on top of the cuts of \$687.9 million by 2015. They will have cuts to their budget over three consecutive years. I will take no lessons from the Conservative government on protecting Canadians. They are not able to give the necessary resources to the organizations that are in charge of doing that.

Mr. Jean Rousseau (Compton—Stanstead, NDP): Mr. Speaker, here we are at the report stage of Bill C-44. It is therefore the perfect time to discuss the Act to amend the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act and other Acts. Of course, this Conservative government never does one thing at a time. It always does many things at the same time, quite superficially sometimes, before moving onto the next thing. This is what we have become used to over three and half years.

We are going to try taking a rather more holistic approach, to look at the wider picture, and to steer our discussions toward more specific points. I always wait with bated breath to see the short titles the Conservatives give to their bills. The short title of Bill C-44 is the Protection of Canada from Terrorists Act. One could dare to think that Bill C-44 would not contain only provisions like the ones we talked about concerning the protection of human sources, since this is a huge issue.

To implement its good intentions, we would expect the government to set aside the human, financial and material resources, but it has taken no such measures. Furthermore, it will not be conducting any studies to find out whether CSIS will need additional assistance in carrying out its mandate and its mission, which is to protect Canadians and Canada.

The Conservatives had already planned on bringing in Bill C-44 long before the recent events of October 20 and 22. The government claims that the bill is intended to modernize the Canadian Security Intelligence Service in a few pages, and points out that the law establishing the mandate for CSIS has not been amended in 30 years.

We must keep pace with the resources available to gangs and criminals everywhere in the world, whether they be financial, human or especially material resources. If we are working with obsolete hardware, it is too late. We cannot intercept crime- or terrorism-related information if our equipment is not up to date. We are talking primarily about technology, telecommunications and computers. It takes enormous resources to monitor all the gangs, terrorist cells, criminals and mafias in the world.

Clearly, the drafting and introduction of this bill are completely opportunistic. From coast to coast, Canadians were deeply affected by the events that disturbed the public order. The minister understood this very well and he played his part. His statements following these incidents could not have been more scripted. These events were very moving, and he was well aware of what he was doing by bringing in this bill at this point in time.

They say they are going to modernize CSIS with a 12-clause bill. With Bill C-44, they want to change CSIS's powers. However, rather than submitting the bill to rigorous scrutiny, the Conservatives rushed its passage in committee by allowing only four hours of hearings with independent experts. This is an insult, because there are very real dangers in giving CSIS new powers without proper oversight. Rather than setting the record straight, this bill paves the way for new legal challenges and, as a number of experts fear, it could well be struck down by the courts.

● (1815)

This bill is inadequate. Consequently, we cannot support it. Witnesses warned us that the bill may be unconstitutional in its current form and that the courts may strike it down.

When we talk about security and the fight against terrorism, we need to talk about resources. The Conservatives have cut funding for public safety organizations for three consecutive years. Those cuts will amount to \$687 million. CSIS alone will be on the receiving end of \$24 million in cuts, and the government has not yet determined how much these new measures will cost or what additional resources they will require.

We are concerned about the impact these cuts will have on the government's ability to properly monitor these organizations, which will ensure that human information sources are protected. That is important.

When we talk about resources, we also need to talk about the Canada Border Services Agency and the RCMP, which are also facing hundreds of millions of dollars in various cuts. Those cuts account for \$400 million of the \$680 million.

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Since coming to power in 2011, the government has chosen to ignore a certain aspect of national security: our borders. The government has abandoned border services officers and RCMP officers. In my riding, a single patrol covers seven border posts every day. That is 120 kilometres of border, including 80 kilometres of forest and dirt roads throughout.

The workers responsible for public safety in our great country have a huge job to do: they have to protect our borders and entry points with minimal resources. They are given minimal resources to keep our great, proud country safe. The government seems only marginally interested in how they manage to do their job, which we know to be a complex and difficult one. These officers have to be ingenious as they apply their skills and abilities with the resources at their disposal.

Can anyone explain to me how we can talk about a bill to protect Canada from terrorists without making sufficient resources available to protect our territory? That is not only inconceivable; it is incomprehensible. Just incomprehensible.

This bill amends the Canadian Security Intelligence Service Act, enhancing the protection of CSIS's human resources. The bill deserved and should have received much more serious weight and attention, within a democratic debate.

We do not have the CIA or MI5 here. However, our border services officers and CSIS agents carry a heavy burden when it comes to protecting Canadians.

In that regard, the bill amends Canadian citizenship so that the effective date of the revocation provisions is different from other provisions in the legislation. We would have liked this change to be studied more carefully.

In closing, we are extremely disappointed that the government rejected our amendments, as reasonable as they were. Once again, we put our trust in the democratic process of the House, so that the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security could reach a model consensus.

We all aspire to a Canada that is just, but has sovereign authority over its borders, because, as our national anthem says, we want to keep our land strong and free.

• (1820)

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague was saying, the amendments were dismissed out of hand. I was not in committee, but I heard that even some witnesses said they had doubts about the constitutionality of Bill C-44.

The NDP introduced a bill that could have improved the situation. Instead, this will likely lead to legal battles that will cost Canadians a lot of money.

What are my colleague's thoughts on all of that?

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Mr. Speaker, the government has the frustrating habit of doing just about anything it believes is right and then stupidly putting it in the hands of the Supreme Court. It brings in regulations and legislation that ignore expert opinions, knowing that, in any event, the Supreme Court will hand down a ruling and make a decision. What a monumental mistake.

This approach has a high price tag for taxpayers. There are still several cases at the Supreme Court that cast doubt on the government's ability to do the right thing when it comes to, in this case, protecting human sources and, above all, ensuring that Canada is a country where the fight against terrorism is fair and just and protects the rights of individuals. As a result, the decision is placed in the hands of the Supreme Court. That is a shameful approach. It is truly bone-headed of the government to act that way.

• (1825)

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before studying Bill C-44, I took a look at the debates of October 1970 out of curiosity.

At that time, Tommy Douglas opposed the War Measures Act, which was invoked in response to the information circulated by Minister Marchand that the FLQ had 3,000 members who were ready to overthrow the democratic Government of Quebec. History has shown us that a threat was invented, promoted and exaggerated to curtail the democratic rights of a people.

I have a bad feeling that we are about to do exactly the same thing. Why do I feel that a terrorist movement is being invented and promoted? We are turning a junkie into a terrorist connected to al Qaeda. We are transforming a poor mentally ill person into a religious fanatic, even though he was not even able to earn a living.

Are we not destroying our rights because of a non-existent threat?

Mr. Jean Rousseau: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for that excellent question. Making judgments like that really trivializes the issue.

The government thinks that its ideology is the right one and that it overrides everything else. Judgments are being made because of that. It is very disappointing to see that people are sometimes being judged just because they disagree with this government. I am not saying that the belligerents or recent events confirm that. I am simply saying that things are being trivialized. People are being stereotyped and they are all being painted with the same brush. As soon as someone disagrees to some degree with the government or what it thinks, the government introduces a bill to prevent that.

Mental illness is among one of the heaviest burdens people are called upon to bear in our society. Such illnesses can completely derail people on all sorts of subjects; they allow themselves to be influenced. If only we had a stronger social fabric and more humane living conditions for everyone, then justice and equity would be present in our society every day. Equity and everyone's rights must be respected. However, we need a social fabric that includes measures such as employment insurance and other programs that help people in need. We do not want people to abuse these programs, but we need to meet people's needs. The Conservative government has abandoned Canadians and the results are sometimes unfortunate and disagreeable. They are painting everyone with the same brush and saying that they are all terrorists. That is unfortunate.

[English]

The Deputy Speaker: Resuming debate, the hon. member for Toronto—Danforth will have only about two minutes.

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to make one simple point with my two minutes.

I would like to draw attention to the witness testimony from Professor Craig Forcese of the University of Ottawa. He said:

I think in the final analysis a warrant will be required whenever foreign surveillance involves covert interception of telecommunications. I also believe the amendments [to the law] may be interpreted as requiring a warrant any time an operation may violate international or foreign law. These would be sensible standards, but because the bill is not emphatic, establishing these standards may require another round of litigation. Therefore I strongly urge the committee to pre-empt the necessity of another half-decade of uncertainty by adding clear language on the trigger for seeking a foreign surveillance warrant.

In committee, we tried just that. We wanted to introduce an amendment, but in the end it was not needed, because another member of the opposition tried something similar. However, it started with the words “for greater certainty” and then said that a warrant would be needed where investigative activities conducted outside of Canada would normally require a warrant if conducted inside of Canada—by reason of the charter—or if the activity may be inconsistent with international law or the law of the foreign state.

Therefore, in tandem with what Professor Forcese said, the official opposition is firmly of the view that this is already implicit in the law, even though the government has chosen not to clarify what standard is needed for a warrant to be requested on a mandatory basis. It is very clear, at a minimum, that the standard I just read out, and which was offered up by Professor Forcese, is what clearly the courts will read into the law. This is the official opposition's understanding of the very minimum requirements for a warrant.

• (1830)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member for Toronto—Danforth will have approximately eight minutes when we resume debate on the bill.

* * *

[Translation]

ECONOMIC ACTION PLAN 2014 ACT, NO. 2

The House resumed consideration from December 5 of Bill C-43, A second Act to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 11, 2014 and other measures, as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No. 1.

The Deputy Speaker: It being 6:30 p.m., the House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded divisions on the motions at report stage of Bill C-43.

Call in the members.

• (1845)

[English]

And the bells having rung:

The Speaker: The question is on Motion No. 47. A vote on this motion also applies to Motion No. 48.

• (1855)

The Speaker: The hon. member for London—Fanshawe is rising.

Ms. Irene Mathysen: Mr. Speaker, I must apologize, but I was so dazzled and mesmerized by the splendour of the tie of the

Government Orders

President of the Treasury Board that I think I may have been overlooked in the voting. I wish to indicate that I am voting in support.

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

(Division No. 302)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Boivin
Borg	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brisson
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Cash	Chan
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Christopherson
Cleary	Comartin
Côté	Cotler
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseau	Easter
Eyking	Foote
Fortin	Freeland
Freeman	Fry
Garneau	Garrison
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Goodale	Gravelle
Groguhé	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jones	Julian
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Lavardière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Masse
Mathysen	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Péclet
Perreault	Pilon
Plamondon	Quach
Rafferty	Rankin
Rathgeber	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Rousseau	Sandhu
Scarpaleggia	Scott
Sellah	Sgro
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	
St-Denis	Stewart
Stoffer	Toone
Tremblay	Trudeau
Turmel	Valeriotte
Vaughan— 111	

NAYS

Members

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

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Bateman	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Crockatt
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Falk
Fantino	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Leef	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Maguire	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Norlock
Obhrai	O'Connor
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	O'Toole
Paradis	Payne
Poillievre	Preston
Rajotte	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Ritz	Saxton
Schellenberger	Seeback
Shea	Shipley
Shory	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Yelich
Young (Oakville)	Young (Vancouver South)
Yurdiga	Zimmer — 152

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 47 defeated. I therefore declare Motion No. 48 defeated.

The next question is on Motion No. 50.

[*Translation*]

A vote on this motion also applies to Motion No. 51.

● (1900)

(The House divided on Motion No. 50, which was negated on the following division:)

(*Division No. 303*)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Boivin
Borg	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brisson
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Cash	Chan
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Christopherson
Cleary	Comartin
Côté	Cotler
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseau	Easter
Eyking	Foote
Fortin	Freeland
Freeman	Fry
Garneau	Garrison
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Goodale	Gravelle
Groguhé	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jones	Julian
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Masse
Mathysen	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Péclet
Perreault	Pilon
Plamondon	Quach
Rafferty	Rankin
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Sandhu	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sellah
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
or)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	St-Denis
Stewart	Stoffer
Toone	Tremblay
Trudeau	Turmel
Valeriote	Vaughan — 110

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy	Adams
Adler	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Aspin
Baird	Barlow
Bateman	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney

Government Orders

Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chong	Clarke
Clement	Crockatt
Daniel	Davidson
Dechert	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Falk
Fantino	Fast
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harper
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Hawn
Hayes	Hiebert
Hillyer	Hoback
Holder	James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	Kent
Kerr	Komarnicki
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Lake
Lauzon	Lebel
Leaf	Leitch
Lemieux	Leung
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)	MacKenzie
Maguire	Mayes
McColeman	McLeod
Miller	Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Norlock
Obhrai	O'Connor
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	O'Toole
Paradis	Payne
Poilievre	Preston
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Uppal	Valcourt
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Wong
Yelich	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Yurdiga
Zimmer — 153	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 50 defeated. I therefore declare Motion No. 51 defeated.

● (1905)

[English]

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC) moved that the bill, as amended, be concurred in at report stage.

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: No.

The Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion, the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

● (1910)

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

(Division No. 304)

YEAS

Members

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

Adjournment Proceedings

Moore (Fundy Royal)	Norlock
Obhrai	O'Connor
Oliver	O'Neill Gordon
Opitz	O'Toole
Paradis	Payne
Poilievre	Preston
Rajotte	Rathgeber
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shipley	Shory
Smith	Sopuck
Sorenson	Stanton
Storseth	Strahl
Sweet	Tilson
Toet	Trost
Trottier	Truppe
Uppal	Valcourt
Van Kesteren	Van Loan
Vellacott	Wallace
Warawa	Warkentin
Watson	Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	Wilks
Williamson	Wong
Yelich	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Yurdiga
Zimmer— 153	

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Aubin
Ayala	Bélanger
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Boivin
Borg	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brisson
Brosseau	Byrne
Caron	Casey
Cash	Chan
Chicoine	Chisholm
Choquette	Christopherson
Cleary	Comartin
Côté	Cotler
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseau	Easter
Eyking	Footo
Fortin	Freeland
Freeman	Fry
Garneau	Garrison
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Goodale	Gravelle
Groguhé	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jones	Julian
Kellway	Lamoureux
Lapointe	Laverdière
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leslie	Liu
MacAulay	Mai
Marston	Masse
Mathysen	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Michaud	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Nantel
Nash	Nicholls
Nunez-Melo	Pacetti
Papillon	Péclet
Perreault	Pilon
Plamondon	Quach
Rafferty	Rankin
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Sandhu	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sellah

Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor)	
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	St-Denis
Stewart	Stoffer
Toone	Tremblay
Trudeau	Turnel
Valeriote	Vaughan— 110

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

[Translation]

MESSAGE FROM THE SENATE

The Deputy Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that a message has been received from the Senate informing this House that the Senate has passed Bill S-219, An Act respecting a national day of commemoration of the exodus of Vietnamese refugees and their acceptance in Canada after the fall of Saigon and the end of the Vietnam War, to which concurrence of the House is desired.

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[Translation]

THE ENVIRONMENT

Mr. François Choquette (Drummond, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise in the House once again to talk about the fight against climate change.

As we know, the UN climate change conference is currently going on in Lima, Peru. On the weekend, Ban Ki-moon, the secretary general of the United Nations, admonished the Conservative government for its poor record on combatting climate change.

On December 2, I asked the Minister of the Environment about what is going on in Lima. As we know, Canada already has a bad reputation when it comes to international negotiations. It has received a number of fossil awards—not exactly something to be proud of.

Our partners are wondering whether the Conservatives will finally do something, now that China and the United States have come to an agreement about enforcing concrete measures to combat climate change. There have already been calls for more ambitious commitments on climate change. I asked the Conservatives whether they were finally going to come up with a credible plan to combat climate change.

Adjournment Proceedings

As I said, this weekend Ban Ki-moon mentioned that Canada will fail to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions based on 2005 data. He was the one who told us. We knew it already, but Ban Ki-moon said it as well, as did the Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, civil servants at Environment Canada and other stakeholders. Now, Ban Ki-moon is again telling us that we will fail to reduce our greenhouse gas emission by 17% in 2020, based on 2005 data. He is calling out the Conservative government, urging it to do much more. He said that oil producing countries, such as Saudi Arabia, are moving away from the use of fossil fuels. He is calling on Canada to immediately do the same. Ban Ki-moon also said that the government needs to become ambitious and visionary when it comes to climate change. In addition, he said that the federal government needs to look beyond the country's borders to give more support to developing countries in their efforts to fight climate change.

We are also concerned about something really unfortunate going on in Canada: the Conservatives are still subsidizing fossil fuels—oil and gas—to the tune of more than \$1.3 billion per year. Canada's subsidies to the fossil fuel industry are among the highest in the world, but we should be using that money to advance green energy and transition to those sources. However, despite all of the stakeholders who have appealed to the government and despite the fact that Canada promised to end those subsidies, the government is only taking baby steps. Those subsidies should be gone already. When the NDP is in power, it will put an end to that \$1.3 billion in subsidies and spend that money on transitioning to green energy instead.

When will the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment announce his plan to eliminate fossil energy subsidies and transition to green energy?

• (1915)

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is working with its international partners to reach a fair and effective climate change agreement.

[*English*]

In fact, this evening, in Lima, Peru, the Minister of the Environment is hosting an event to highlight the importance of incorporating traditional knowledge in environmental decision-making. Key countries and international organizations will discuss how traditional knowledge can support the development of successful environmental policies and programs.

Canada has worked to promote traditional knowledge through its chairmanship of the Arctic Council. The Minister of the Environment has seen first-hand how traditional knowledge improves our understanding of the world around us. It is our hope that the discussion will promote the use of this knowledge in environmental decision-making at the domestic and international levels.

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Choquette: Mr. Speaker, that answer was rather short. I expect a lot more from my colleague, the parliamentary secretary, who works very hard. I was hoping for a more complete answer.

I did not actually get an answer to my question, so I do not know if there are any plans to eliminate fossil fuel subsidies and make the shift towards green energy. It is too bad, because the Minister of the Environment, as my colleague mentioned, is currently in Peru. This would be the perfect time to announce some ambitious targets. We are going to miss the 17% target. We just need to look at the Conservative government's record. It withdrew from the Kyoto protocol. Since 2012, environment commissioners have been saying that we will not meet even our weak target. Canada is one of the worst countries in the world when it comes to per capita greenhouse gas emissions.

One thing is certain: we need firm and sustained commitments. Last week my colleague asked about the \$300 million for foreign aid. Where is it? It is not in the budget. How is it possible that the \$300 million promised for foreign aid is not in the budget? When will it be in the budget, next year? And over how many years will that money be spread? Over 50 years? We want to know. We want answers.

• (1920)

Mr. Colin Carrie: Mr. Speaker, our government's record is clear. We have taken decisive action on the environment while protecting our economy. We believe that any international climate agreement must include meaningful and transparent commitments by all major emitters.

The Deputy Speaker: 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 7:21 p.m.)

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