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(HANSARD)

Monday, January 27, 2014

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, January 27, 2014

The House met at 11 a.m.

Prayers

• (1105)
[*English*]

VACANCY

FORT MCMURRAY—ATHABASCA

The Speaker: It is my duty to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the representation, namely Mr. Jean, member for the electoral district of Fort McMurray—Athabasca, by resignation effective Friday, January 17, 2014.

[*Translation*]

Pursuant to paragraph 25(1)(b) of the Parliament of Canada Act, I have addressed my warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for the election of a member to fill this vacancy.

* * *

[*English*]

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that Mr. Toone, member for the electoral district of Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, has been appointed as a member of the Board of Internal Economy in place of Mr. Cullen, member for the electoral district of Skeena—Bulkley Valley, for the purposes and under the provisions of section 50 of the Parliament of Canada Act.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*Translation*]

ELECTRONIC PETITIONS

The House resumed from October 28, 2013, consideration of the motion.

Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since this is the first speech of this parliamentary session and the first of 2014, I would like to wish all members of the House a very happy new year. I hope this year will bring lots of interesting, relevant debate.

With this in mind, let us talk about the motion moved by my colleague, Motion No. 428. Several members, myself included, are of the opinion that it will improve parliamentary debate so that it more accurately reflects what really matters to Canadians.

As the NDP critic on digital issues, I am often asked to evaluate new technologies that will enhance communication with our constituents, with the hope that they will become more involved in the debates. For instance, the Internet is an excellent tool for sharing information and making people aware of important current issues.

At present, although Canadians can get information and learn more about an issue, they cannot take action by signing an online petition. In fact, their online signatures are absolutely worthless in this House. This is a serious flaw. In this digital age, the House does not reflect how the world works today. The fact that only paper petitions can be submitted is a flaw. Many people sign electronic petitions, but their voices will never be heard here.

It is our duty to modernize how we do things in order to better represent Canadians. These days, nearly everyone is on Facebook and other social networks. That is how we communicate. Accordingly, why not present issues in a way that reflects how the world works in the 21st century?

Everyone of my generation is on Facebook. We all use social networks to communicate. I very often receive online petitions from my constituents and even my friends. Unfortunately, as it stands, they are pointless. The legislatures in Quebec and the United Kingdom accept online petitions. Now it is our turn.

We need to do everything we possibly can to get young people involved in democracy. In 2011, only 39% of young people voted in the election. My colleague came up with the idea of moving a motion that would make it acceptable to present online petitions. I sincerely believe that this will ensure that youth are better represented in the House, that their voices are heard and that we are talking about things that are of interest to them.

I would like to point out that this is not the first time this idea has been discussed. The issue was raised as part of a committee study during the 38th Parliament. That was a long time ago and nothing has been done. It is clearly time to act.

I am hearing more and more that people are not interested in politics. Perhaps the issues we are talking about today and those we have talked about during this parliamentary session are not what matter to the people in my riding or their neighbours.

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The motion moved by my colleague would allow Canadians to directly influence debate in the House. What could be better for democracy? Other ideas can certainly be proposed in the future; however, this first step is an essential one.

According to a 2012 study by Samara, only 55% of Canadians are satisfied or very satisfied with our democracy.

We have some work to do to achieve a better result. I think we can do better than 55%.

The purpose of this initiative is to have members debate an issue when 50,000 people have signed a petition that five members of Parliament have sponsored. This number is not in the wording of the motion, but that is something we can discuss with hon. members.

For 50,000 people to take the time to sign a petition suggests that the subject matter is very important to them. It is our duty to discuss that subject. This could be a way to encourage people to vote and to watch the debates in the House of Commons. A very small minority of people are watching this debate right now or watch the debates on a regular basis. When there is a proposal like Motion No. 428, we should act on it and support it. We should do everything possible to make the House relatable to people and help them see that it truly debates issues that matter to them. What my colleague is proposing just might do that.

I would like to mention some of the support my colleague has received for this motion. That support is coming from various sources: the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, Preston Manning, and OpenMedia, an agency that seeks to use new technologies to engage people in the democratic process.

It is time to modernize Parliament. This institution is old, but we have the means to improve democracy and to give our constituents a voice in the House. I congratulate my colleague on putting forward this proposal. I hope that on Wednesday, all the members of the House will support the motion.

• (1110)

[English]

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to participate in today's debate on Motion No. 428, sponsored by the member for Burnaby—Douglas, which would create a new electronic petitions system. My colleague across the way has a keen interest in the role of Parliament and its members and has examined the experience of other jurisdictions with electronic petitions.

I want to emphasize the government's commitment to a strong Parliament. All members know that in 2006, the government's first act after forming government was to pass the Federal Accountability Act, which changed the way Ottawa does business for the better. Thanks to this unprecedented legislation, government accountability has been strengthened, including accountability to Parliament, and the government has further continued to promote democratic reform and open and transparent government.

Let me now turn to Motion No. 428. The first part of the motion would essentially require the procedure and House affairs committee to recommend changes to the Standing Orders and other conventions

governing petitions so as to create and implement an electronic petitions system.

The second part of Motion No. 428 would require the committee to consider, among other things, the possibility of a debate in the House outside sitting hours when a petition has reached a certain threshold of signatures.

The motion goes on to state that the committee would have to table its report within 12 months of the motion being adopted. Under the terms of the motion, the committee would be required to include recommended changes to the Standing Orders and other conventions to implement an electronic petitions system. Basically, to summarize, the motion requires that the committee report lead to the implementation of an electronic petitions system for the House.

For the purposes of this debate, it is worth first examining our current paper-based petition system. Our current petition system is set out in Standing Order 36, which is based on principles of representative democracy and the fundamental role of an individual member of Parliament. As evidenced by the 2,000 petitions presented by members in 2012, the system works quite well.

The Standing Order requires that before petitions can be presented, they must be certified correct by the Clerk of Petitions. House rules specify that at least 25 Canadians must sign a petition, using the proper format, including a statement of the grievance, and that it be addressed to the House, the government, a minister, or a member of the House for a response.

It is a matter of routine practice that members table petitions on behalf of constituents, and it is understood that members may not always agree with the views of a specific petition. Following the presentation of the petition, the government must respond within 45 calendar days.

Our current petitions system functions efficiently. The system is transparent. Canadians are able to tune in and watch our proceedings to see what petitions are being presented, or they can view a list of petitions presented in *House of Commons Debates* or in *Journals* of the House.

As we debate Motion No. 428, it is useful to examine the experience of other jurisdictions.

Most jurisdictions have a petitions system similar to our current approach and appear to be satisfied with that approach. However, there are some jurisdictions that have recently implemented electronic petitions systems as part of their legislature or as part of the government's operations.

In 2011 the United Kingdom House of Commons authorized electronic petitions. Petitions with at least 100,000 signatures can have a debate in the House or in Westminster Hall, a parallel chamber to the House. To date, these debates have included national issues such as health care and pension increases as well as special interests, such as eliminating welfare benefits for the convicted 2011 London rioters, heart surgery at a local hospital, and the elimination of the badger cull.

I would contend that the experience of the United Kingdom suggests that while electronic petitions can increase the participation of citizens in the petition process, they can also be used by orchestrated special interests to force their agenda onto the parliamentary stage.

Similarly, the We the People electronic petitions system established by the White House in the United States, whereby petitions with at least 100,000 signatures are publicly recognized, has been used to advance topics such as the *Star Wars*-inspired Death Star and the deportation of a CNN journalist.

Some commentators in the United States have suggested that electronic petitions systems can undermine representative democracy by recognizing or debating divisive or frivolous issues. I would ask members whether they would want to create an electronic petitions system if that were to be the result.

• (1115)

In addition, at a time of fiscal restraint, the creation and implementation of a new electronic petition system, and potentially the addition of extra sitting hours for the House to debate petitions with a high number of signatures, could be quite costly. Further, the need to put in place a process to verify thousands of online signatures could prove to be quite an involved and onerous process. Do members believe that such an additional cost would be prudent at a time of global economic uncertainty and fiscal restraint?

The member for Burnaby—Douglas has said that the electronic petitions would “empower citizens to communicate their concerns with their elected representatives and to have the opportunity to set the agenda for debate in Ottawa”.

As all members know, every day of the year, whether in our ridings or here in Ottawa, Canadians have many options for contacting their individual members of Parliament or the government. Each of us is regularly back in his or her constituency. We all have staff in our constituency offices and in Ottawa to help constituents with questions and detailed requests, including through electronic means such as email and websites. I ask members whether creating an electronic petition system would really enhance our ability to engage and serve our constituents.

As mentioned at the beginning of my speech, Motion No. 428 presupposes a result for the work of the procedures and House affairs committee. By dictating the outcome, Motion No. 428 undermines the principle that committees are masters of their own affairs. It is one thing for the House to instruct the committee to undertake a study, but this motion goes too far and oversteps the principle that committees are masters of their own proceedings. I would ask members whether they want to support a motion that would diminish the independence of a House committee and the ability of members of committees to decide upon and manage their own affairs.

On the surface, the idea of creating an electronic petition system may have some appeal in terms of using new technologies to serve our constituents. However, the experience of other jurisdictions suggests that many countries have decided not to implement an electronic petition system and that such a system could become a popularity contest and be open to abuse by special interests. In

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addition, the cost of implementing a new electronic petition system is a concern during a time of budget constraints.

Finally, I take issue with the wording of the motion as it undermines the principle of House committees being masters of their own affairs.

For these reasons, I am not prepared to support the motion. However, I note that the procedure and House affairs committee will be examining our rules and procedures, and if its members were to agree, the committee could decide to review the effectiveness of our current petition system and whether changes are needed.

• (1120)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I must say at the beginning that I am somewhat surprised at the way the government members are responding to this motion. We see before us a motion that would enable Canadians to participate in our process and have the opportunity, through petitions, to express themselves. I am surprised by the arguments being brought forward.

For example, the member from the government who stood before me talked about a significant cost factor. I can assure the member that it would be a fraction of the potential cost of the increase, by the current government, in the number of members of Parliament. The Conservatives are increasing the size of the House of Commons, estimated to cost over \$30 million a year. Interestingly, I have a petition on that issue. There has been an overwhelming response from the constituents I represent that we do not need to increase the number of MPs in the House of Commons. I can assure the member that it would cost Canadians a lot more to increase the number of politicians in this House, which is ultimately unnecessary, than it would to allow Canadians the opportunity to be engaged through petitions.

This is really where the government is off base. Why would the Conservatives oppose the opportunity for citizens from across Canada to provide their thoughts on a wide variety of issues that come before this House?

I was at a protest rally at the Manitoba legislature just two days ago. Individuals from Winnipeg, and I suspect from even outside of Winnipeg, came to the Manitoba legislature because they were concerned about what was happening in Ukraine. What is happening in Ukraine today is horrific. It is a slap at fundamental freedoms. The people of Ukraine want to be able to express themselves and to have the right to do so. Some of the actions we have seen in Ukraine go against some of the fundamental principles we often take for granted here. It was interesting that at the rally, one of the calls was to have people attending that rally sign petitions. In fact, I have already submitted, first thing this morning, the names of some of the individuals who signed that petition so that I would be able to stand in my place at some future time, hopefully soon, and express to the floor of the House of Commons the wishes of those individuals who took the time to go to the Manitoba legislature and sign a petition.

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What are we asking for here? It is an opportunity for a committee of the House of Commons, on which I sit, to study the issue of electronic petitions. What is wrong with that? What do the Conservatives have against affording the public the ability to participate? On the issue of Ukraine, could members imagine the response if we were allowed to use electronic petitions through the Internet? Hundreds of thousands of Canadians from coast to coast to coast would be able to engage on this one issue alone.

The leader of the Liberal Party constantly talks about going out and meeting and connecting with Canadians and trying to get Canadians engaged. Unlike the Prime Minister of this country, the leader of the Liberal Party is constantly out meeting with Canadians and challenging the government to be more accountable.

• (1125)

This is one of the ways in which Canadians could, in fact, have the opportunity to send messages and participate in the process. Yet the government, for whatever reason, says no, not this time, or it does not want this to move forward. It does not want to provide answers to the types of petitions that might come through electronic means.

The member who spoke before me started off by speaking about accountability, as if the government is more accountable. He talked about his accountability legislation. I have not been here for that long, but with regard to the accountability within this chamber, I would challenge the member or any government member for the way in which the Conservative-Reform government has taken away accountability inside the chamber and limited debate. There are record high numbers of time allocation by the current majority government, unprecedented in Canadian history.

Budget implementation bills have multiplied by hundreds of pages, with numerous pieces of legislation all wrapped up in one bill. Liberals do not have to take any lessons from the current majority government in terms of accountability, because it lacks it in the chamber; and I am disappointed that it does not see the merit of at least allowing the debate of electronic petitioning. I, for one, use petitions a great deal. I afford the constituents of Winnipeg North the opportunity, as much as I can. Quite often in my mailings I encourage people to get engaged in the process by signing petitions.

I have presented petitions on issues such as housing co-ops, the Experimental Lakes Area, refugees, crime prevention, Canada Post, the environment, Elections Canada and robocalls, as well as ethical corporations in developing countries. Of course, one of my favourites was the petition with regard to the government's wanting to increase the age of retirement from 65 to 67. The constituents of Winnipeg North say no to that, and they have been signing petitions to that effect. They value our programs for pensions.

The health accord is going to expire in 2014 and the government has done nothing to support the renewal of a health care accord, which Paul Martin established, that has seen more money delivered to health care than ever before. The government likes to take credit for the amount of money that is going into federal transfers for health care, when it was actually former prime minister Paul Martin. I have a petition that calls on the government to deal with the health care issue.

I made reference to the number of members of Parliament. I talked about the signatures from the Manitoba legislature related to Ukraine. Over the last seven days, someone contacted me about a pet registry petition, which I look forward to presenting. These are petitions that Canadians have seen fit to sign because they believe in what is being reported in those petitions.

How does electronic petitioning hurt democracy here in Canada? We should at least allow it to continue in terms of debate. Let us bring it to the procedure and House affairs committee. I represent the Liberal Party on that committee, and I can say that the Liberal Party, in fact, is very supportive of the concept of electronic petitions. Liberals see it as a way for more Canadians to get involved in our democracy, and that is a good thing. We see that as a healthy thing.

• (1130)

We are asking the government and all members to open their eyes, as hopefully members of the Conservative Party will see the value of at least bringing it to the next step.

I appreciate the opportunity to share a few words with members.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak to Motion No. 428 about e-petitions. This initiative was put forward by my NDP colleague from Burnaby—Douglas, a meticulous and effective parliamentarian, and a champion of democracy.

I would like to begin by pointing out that the Conservative government has a very poor record when it comes to democratic participation. First, the Conservatives tried to prevent citizens from participating in environmental assessments. Then they muzzled scientists and librarians. After that, they started a witch hunt against environmental organizations that oppose their policies.

The NDP believes that citizens should have the opportunity to participate in democracy, to intervene and to express their opinions about the government's policies. This motion, which encourages citizen involvement, is in line with our philosophy.

I would like to explain how the system works now. As we all know, petitions have always been a key part of our democratic system. People use petitions to draw Parliament's attention to a problem.

Right now, electronic petitions cannot be presented in the House of Commons by members because they do not comply with the Standing Orders. As a result, the government is not required to provide an official response to e-petitions the way it does to paper-based petitions.

Motion No. 428 recommends updating the rules governing the format of petitions and studying the possibility of letting e-petitions trigger a debate in the House of Commons once a certain number of signatures have been collected and if at least five members sponsor a petition.

Clearly, the Standing Orders need updating. The House of Commons has to get with the times and take into account what Canadians are thinking now that they are making increasing use of electronic means to communicate and join forces on political issues. We have to give people more ways to participate in their democracy; we have to adapt democracy to 21st-century realities. If we do not, Parliament will become more and more useless, perhaps even insignificant. Anyone who looks at the other chamber, the Senate, will see that is true.

Right now, thousands of Canadians feel left out and powerless when it comes to decisions made in the House. I happen to agree. The current rules have led to a growing divide between people and the government.

The numbers speak for themselves. According to an online survey of Canadians carried out by Samara in December 2012, only 55% of Canadians report being satisfied with the way democracy works in Canada. This number is going down, since it used to be 75% in 2004. To combat this democratic deficit, we need to start listening to Canadians again. They need to feel that their voices are being heard.

I will digress for a moment to point out that this is why we are calling for reform of the Elections Act. We need to give more powers to Elections Canada, so that it can more effectively combat election fraud.

We have been seeing the worst kinds of abuse from the Conservative Party in recent years. For example, there were the misleading phone calls to deny voters their right to vote; the bending of the rules on political party funding, which is known as the Conservative in and out scandal; and the election schemes of the former Conservative minister from Labrador, who failed to declare election expenses. Furthermore, the current member for Peterborough is facing four charges in court regarding overspending during the 2008 election campaign.

These despicable actions are alienating Canadians from politics, since they get the impression that they do not really have a say in the matter. They come to believe that the only things taken seriously are the interests of the Conservative Party's big contributors and their friends.

• (1135)

I could also talk about the need to change our voting system to make sure that every vote counts. Many changes need to be made to our electoral and parliamentary system, but I will save that for another day because my time is short.

More fundamentally, we need to fix the Elections Act to regain Canadians' trust. It is also important to change the rules governing how our parliamentary institutions operate so that we can better connect with Canadians. Petition reform is part of that overall plan. Unlike the Conservatives, we want more than ever to strengthen Canadian democracy and to do everything we can to get Canadians involved in the debates that affect them because, ultimately, this is their House of Commons. We want to give Canadians a chance to have a say in Parliament's agenda. That is why Motion No. 428, which was moved by the hon. member for Burnaby—Douglas, calls for the use of electronic petitions in the House. I wish to make it clear, however, that we do not want to do away with the current

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Standing Order with regard to paper petitions. Both paper and electronic petitions will be accepted.

I can attest to the fact that my colleague has done an excellent job of garnering support within all political parties. On the left, former NDP leader Ed Broadbent supported the initiative by saying:

Bringing electronic petitioning to the House of Commons is a 21st Century idea and one I fully endorse. Empowering Canadians to come together and help set the Parliamentary agenda will breathe fresh air into our democracy.

My colleague also had the support of Preston Manning, a well-known political figure in our country, who clearly stated:

To be able to petition one's elected representatives, and to have such petitions addressed, is one of the oldest and most basic of democratic rights. Affirming and re-establishing this right in the 21st century through electronic petitioning is an idea well worth pursuing.

Similarly, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation welcomes this motion:

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation applauds this worthy initiative from the member [for Burnaby—Douglas] to kick-start Parliament on accepting electronic signatures on petitions. When taxpayers get the opportunity to go online and sign an official petition to Parliament, they'll be able to get the attention of Ottawa politicians in a hurry. We also support the [member's] suggestion that 50,000 Canadians signing a petition and 5 MPs should be able to force a debate in Parliament. This would help restore some grassroots democracy and accountability on Parliament Hill.

According to an Angus Reid poll conducted in March 2013, Canadians, including my constituents, widely support the principles of Motion No. 418. The pollster found that 81% of Canadians either support or strongly support the use of electronic petitions as a way to present their concerns to the federal government. It is important to understand that this motion represents real progress towards improving Canadian democracy and the vitality of our participatory institutions.

Promoting and adopting this motion are one more step towards creating a healthier, more transparent democracy. This is a tangible step with clear and demonstrable repercussions on how important issues are represented in parliamentary debates. It will also allow us to productively channel the widespread discontent regarding Canadian democracy and many of its institutions, including the Senate, where the Conservatives are now showing their true colours. I think it is absolutely crucial that our constituents be included in the political process, and such a motion would be one of the best ways to encourage them to actively participate in our public debates.

I urge my colleagues to support this motion in order to lead off the debate on the future of electronic petitions in our country.

• (1140)

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is the first time I have risen to speak in 2014. Allow me, respectfully, to wish you a good year, in the hope that our democratic institutions will increase in value, which has absolutely not been the case in previous years.

The motion we are discussing this morning could be an excellent way to get back on track.

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I would also like to wish an excellent year to my fellow MPs and to all Canadians and Quebecers, who I hope might once again be proud of their politicians because of the quality of the debates that we engage in throughout this new year.

When I was elected in 2011, I was determined to improve our democracy. I still am. The desire to change the way politics is done continues to drive my political involvement. It is not so easy to change things in this honourable institution, Canada's Parliament, but I am not one to give up on my goals so quickly.

The subject we are discussing this morning is quite the paradox between tradition and the need to modernize our political institution.

Hon. members also know that I am a teacher by profession and that engaging young people in public debate is one of my priorities. I, like many others, was disappointed to see that voter turnout among 18- to 24-year-olds in the 2011 federal election was 39%, which was well below the national voter turnout of 59%. That is not a spectacular number either, but it is far better.

There are likely a number of reasons for this that deserve our attention. In my riding, Trois-Rivières, I was surprised to learn that political debate seems undesirable at the university, where student associations—NDP, Conservative, Liberal, PQ, whatever the political stripe—do not seem to be welcome.

How are we supposed to engage young people and prepare a new generation of active citizens when political debate is considered suspect or dangerous? I must admit that I have a problem with that attitude and the fact that many public places are not open to political debate.

Now that the opportunity is here to explore this issue, I am very pleased to speak to Motion No. 428 on electronic petitions moved by my colleague, the member for Burnaby—Douglas.

Mr. Speaker, like the vast majority of us, you have a Facebook page, a Twitter account, a YouTube channel and a website. I know because I checked.

All of these digital tools are useful in helping us accomplish some of our work as parliamentarians. They allow us to share our ideas, our values and our vision for the Canada of tomorrow. Much of our work and that of our assistants is visible on social media.

I have, at times, had the pleasure of working with the longest-serving member of the House, the member for Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour. He told me that when he began his career, he did not have any of these tools, not even a cell phone. Today, politicians would be at a loss without these tools. As time moved on, we adapted to new technology and the purpose it can serve. I believe there is more to be done.

These platforms serve as more than just a means of spreading our political message and doing politics. We also need social media and the Internet to communicate with all of our constituents, all of the groups that wish to be in contact with us and those interested in the debates taking place in our democracy. We use digital media every day in order to speak with our constituents, no matter which party we belong to or what our ideas are.

In just a few short years, democracy has gone online. Long speeches in the public square are becoming increasingly rare. Even more rare is an entire town or community gathering together to listen to us. The relationship between parliamentarians and constituents has been transformed and there is no going back. The town square is virtual now, and we need to keep up with the times if we want to connect with the people we claim to serve.

My colleague's motion acknowledges that transformation and sheds some light on the issue. The idea is that if we, as parliamentarians, can make frequent use of digital tools to share our thoughts, why is the public not also able to use technology to connect with us?

In other words, we are constantly reaching out, trying to convince them of our ideas, but they cannot influence our debates or our agenda by taking advantage of progress in electronic communications.

• (1145)

It is almost hypocritical of us, and we need to try to change that. That is exactly what this motion is about. What my colleague is proposing in this motion is quite simple. He is proposing that the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs recommend changes to the Standing Orders so as to establish an electronic petitioning system in Canada, while maintaining the existing paper-based petition system. The committee would present a report to the House sometime in the next year. Among other things, the member's motion recommends that the committee consider the possibility of holding debates in the House of Commons, similar to take note debates, once a certain threshold of signatures is reached. For example, 50,000 signatures on an electronic petition is a considerable number. I think it is a rather serious problem if members do not feel that an issue with such support must be addressed. In addition, five members of Parliament would have to agree to sponsor or support the petition in question.

Electronic petitioning systems are nothing new. An increasing number of democracies are embracing this new way of doing things to revitalize the relationship between the work of parliamentarians and constituents. Need I remind members that our Parliament does not always have a good reputation and that our institution has been harshly criticized by Canadians? The Senate scandals and the Conservative government's inability to address the related issues are fueling people's cynicism about both chambers of Parliament. I am confident that any initiative that would reaffirm and restore Canadians' trust in our work is a step forward, a step in the right direction for our democracy.

As I was saying, electronic petitioning systems are nothing new. They are already in use in Quebec and the United Kingdom, and the results are quite promising. We would do well to take a closer look at them. In the British system, for example, petitions supported by at least 100,000 signatures trigger a debate. However, this new way of doing things has not made any significant changes to procedures or the rigour of the work. Members do not have to be concerned that our agenda will be disrupted by the tabling of a huge number of petitions. Although electronic petitions with over 50,000 signatures are not unheard of, they all draw attention to important issues.

Private Members' Business

According to an Angus Reid poll, this motion already has support from a wide range of stakeholder groups and 81% of the population. We are talking about 81%. In what survey will you find more than 80% of Canadians and Quebecers agreeing on an issue? It is clear that Canadians and Quebecers want to see our systems modernized. This reflects their growing expectation that the House of Commons pay more attention to movements of opinion across the entire country.

I have two examples. First, I want to talk about Marie-Hélène Dubé, a Quebec woman who decided to start a national petition after her third reoccurrence of thyroid cancer. Her petition calls on the federal government to amend section 12 of the Employment Insurance Act, which is 40 years old, to ensure that people with serious illnesses can receive more than 15 weeks of benefits, which is what they receive now. As we speak, this national petition has collected around 430,000 signatures.

I would also like to talk about Sylvie Therrien's online petition. Ms. Dubé developed a rather onerous technique that means people have to sign the paper version of the petition and print it, so that it can be submitted in the House. Ms. Therrien, who had a different experience, also has thousands of signatures on her petition, but unfortunately, it cannot be submitted to the House.

In conclusion, I want to quickly say that this is a tangible measure that will have a clear and demonstrable impact on the way issues that are important to Canadians are represented in parliamentary debates. This proposal would also be a proactive way to combat the widespread discontent with respect to Canadian democracy and many of its institutions, including the Senate.

Therefore, I fully support my colleague's motion. I hope that in 2014, the Canadian Parliament can join the 21st century and agree to hear from the people of this country through electronic petitions.

• (1150)

[*English*]

The Deputy Speaker: I would advise the hon. member that in order for the sponsor of this motion to exercise his five-minute right of reply, the member for Victoria will only have nine minutes of debate.

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to be participating in this debate.

I want to congratulate my friend and colleague from Burnaby—Douglas for this initiative. In a former life he was a professor of public policy at Simon Fraser University, where he studied the very issues that are before us today. I commend him for bringing them to the House of Commons.

If ever there were a non-partisan issue, I would have thought it would be this one. It is trying to improve our democracy, trying to enhance the participation by people from all walks of life in Canada, and in particular the young people. I will come to that in a moment.

What I would like to do first today is to describe what I understand this motion to be, and what it is not, despite some people characterizing it as such, and to talk about, if I may, the objections that might be raised to an initiative like this. I hope we can persuade

all colleagues to agree that this is an initiative that is long past due in our country.

The clear intent is to modernize our long-standing tradition of citizen petitioning of their government. That has been done to date only in paper form. What we have is a transformative technology called the Internet that has changed so many aspects of our lives. Young people come to me in my riding of Victoria and say “Well, why do you not use the Internet? Why do you have to sign the petitions? Why can I not just send an email?”

Young people basically cannot understand why this is not already in place. They particularly cannot understand when I advise them that it has been the case in other modern democracies, like Great Britain, where it is working well, and in Quebec, the Northwest Territories and other places. They look at me and ask, “What is wrong with you? Why do you not harness this communication tool that has been made available?”

Canadians are among the most plugged in people on the planet, and it is getting to be more and more the case that Canadians utilize the Internet. Why can we not use electronic petitions?

This motion does not do much more than say that we should get the relevant committee, the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs to examine this, not to replace paper petitions but to enhance the ability of citizens to participate by way of electronic petitions, and to consider a number of things as well, which I will come to.

This initiative comes within a broader context of parliamentary reform initiatives, such as the private member's bill introduced by the member of Parliament for Wellington—Halton Hills. His proposed reform act of 2013 was designed to reinforce the principles of responsible government by which the executive branch is accountable to the legislative branch of the government. This is just one manifestation of the hunger in our democracy for parliamentary reform and for bringing our institutions, of which Canadians should be very proud, into the 21st century to enhance and make our democracy more vibrant.

We hear people talking about other reform initiatives. The NDP has proudly been in favour of proportional representation for many years. I believe that will go some distance, along with the reform initiatives of the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills. This electronic petitions initiative must be understood in the broader context of that reality. People want this.

The recommendation in this motion is that the procedures committee consider the possibility of triggering a debate in the House, something like a take note debate, once a certain number of signatures, such as the proposed 50,000 that we have heard, have been obtained. What is a take note debate? For those watching, it may not be clear. Historically a minister moves a motion which includes the words “that the House take note” of something. It is designed to solicit the views of members on some aspects of government policy. It does not usually come to a vote. We have used it very effectively on issues such as peacekeeping commitments, NORAD, missile testings, and the war in Kosovo. These are all examples where this has been used.

Private Members' Business

A take note debate is all that would be triggered under this motion. It is not a direct democracy initiative. It enhances our parliamentary procedures.

The problem is that such online petitions cannot be tabled in the House of Commons under our rules. That is why we are debating this. The United Kingdom has a threshold of 100,000 signatures before a take note debate may be triggered.

• (1155)

Based on the population differential between Canada and the United Kingdom, 50,000 signatures has been proposed. That may well be the right number, but the committee should examine that and give us its response.

Many from every side of the political spectrum have validated this, ranging from Mr. Preston Manning to Mr. Ed Broadbent. We have heard from many equality-seeking groups, such as Egale Canada, which have strongly supported this, all the way to the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, a group that I often do not have a meeting of minds with at the finance committee. However, the federation is completely behind this as well, as are so many other groups.

In an effort to persuade all members to get onside with this reform initiative, I want to talk about what the objections to such an initiative might be.

The kind of objections that have been brought forward, and for which I am indebted to the member for Burnaby—Douglas, are as follows. Maybe the initiative will be costly. What is the experience in other countries? Will frivolous issues be generated as a consequence of these electronic petitions? Perhaps the wording of the motion is problematic.

I will examine those in the time available because we need to disabuse members of those concerns.

First, on the cost side, the member for Burnaby—Douglas has talked to a number of members of political science departments and has used the Library of Parliament, and there have been no cost concerns. In Quebec and the Northwest Territories existing resources are mostly used. There has been no concern of that kind.

Second, the experience in other countries has been uniformly positive. The Library of Parliament reported back that no jurisdiction has ever put an e-petition in place and then taken it out. Once enacted, it seems to have gone well. Indeed, a recent House of Commons committee in the U.K. studied it and reported back the following:

The system introduced by the Government has proven to be very popular and has already provided the subjects for a number of lively and illuminating debates.

That does not sound as if the U.K. government wants to get rid of it.

As for frivolous matters being a concern, the point is that five members of Parliament would have to look at the petition. It would also require a certain threshold of signatures. That should be an effective check of any abuse.

With respect to the question of the wording being too prescriptive, as some say, that does not seem to be the case if we examine similar motions.

Therefore, by way of conclusion, I would urge all members of the House to reform our parliamentary institutions to allow a more vibrant, participatory democracy and to take advantage of the technology of the Internet to enhance all of our parliamentary traditions.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to speak here in the early days of the new year.

Let me begin by thanking all hon. members for participating in this debate on my motion to bring electronic petitions to Parliament. I think the spirit of the debate has been respectful. What I will try to do in my five minutes is to give some more information that might help members decide to support this.

I believe that we all want to find practical ways to make Parliament more accessible for our constituents. My motion is in the spirit of what I see as an emerging trend of cross-partisan efforts to reform Canadian politics.

Next week, we will vote on a measure by the member for Saskatoon—Humboldt regarding committee reform. We will also soon consider Bill C-599, the reform act, put forward by the hon. member for Wellington—Halton Hills. I am proud to say that I have jointly seconded both of these efforts. In fact, I view these three proposals as somewhat of a package that would bring real change to how we do business in this place.

It appears that this cross-partisan spirit is infectious. Former reform party leader Preston Manning and former NDP leader Ed Broadbent have endorsed my e-petitions motion, as have the Canadian Taxpayers Federation and the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives. Moreover, as my colleagues mentioned, Canadians want electronic petitions. An Angus Reid poll shows that over 80% of Canadians support bringing electronic petitioning to Parliament.

Again, though, my motion is just one step in the larger process. I would like to say that what I am proposing here is only a study. This is not a motion to bring e-petitions to Parliament; it is a motion to study this before we move to bringing e-petitions to Parliament. It is a study on how we might implement electronic petitioning only to supplement our current paper-based system.

If it is the will of the House to modernize our democracy in this simple way, then it would be the responsibility of the procedure and House affairs committee to conduct this study and make recommendations as to how we would best accomplish this goal.

It has been suggested that perhaps I should have introduced a bill rather than a motion. However, the respective procedures of this House are such that that Standing Orders are usually amended using motions. That is why I used this method. More important, the best laws and rules are often only reached after careful consideration and consultation. An in-depth committee study would allow us to hear from experts in civil society to ensure that we get this right. That is important.

The issue of costs has been brought up a number of times. I have asked the Library of Parliament to look into how much it would cost if we decided to move ahead with these reforms. These costs would not be onerous at all.

As my colleague said, the National Assembly in Quebec has looked at this. It reports that their e-petition system was developed and is maintained through existing resources. So there are no extra costs.

In the Northwest Territories, the initial start-up cost was \$8,000. However, the year-to-year cost is only \$800. So it is a very low-cost way to bring thousands, if not millions, of people into this process.

It might actually save money as well, because it might reduce the burden upon MPs who are now inundated with hundreds of electronic petitions that we cannot present here in the House but that we have to sift through and reply to.

In the U.K. and in the U.S., citizens can create an account, and once their identity is verified they can sign on to whatever petitions they choose. That might be something we would choose to do here. Again, it would give people an official way to get into the process and, once registered, they could do it over and over again.

Some members have expressed to me their concerns about my idea of building in a safeguard of having five MPs sign on to any petition receiving sufficient signatures to trigger a take-note-style debate. They think perhaps five members is not enough. However, the procedure and House affairs committee could certainly sort that out and might conclude that maybe 10 MPs would be the proper number.

An hon. member: Why not?

• (1200)

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Why not? This is what a committee does. Again, if it wants to safeguard the House of Commons through this debate, that is a very good way to do it.

In conclusion, a lot of countries use electronic petitions. I feel that Canada is behind. No country has ever shut down an e-petitioning system once it has been installed. Every single legislature that has adopted this innovation has been sufficiently satisfied to keep it.

If we went ahead with the study and implemented this initiative, it would better our democracy, I feel. It would allow northern and rural Canadians to overcome geographic challenges to better access their legislature.

I ask all reform-minded MPs to join me in taking this small practical step to improve our democracy by supporting the motion.

The Deputy Speaker: That brings to a conclusion the debate on this motion.

• (1205)

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.

Government Orders

The Deputy Speaker: All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Deputy Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

The Deputy Speaker: Pursuant to Standing Order 93 the division stands deferred until Wednesday, January 29, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

[*Translation*]

VOTES ON BILLS C-475 AND C-513

The Deputy Speaker: I would like to inform the House that, pursuant to Standing Order 94, the divisions on Bill C-475, An Act to amend the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (order-making power), and Bill C-513, An Act to promote and strengthen the Canadian retirement income system, stand deferred until Wednesday, January 29, 2014, immediately before the time provided for private members' business.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

RESPECT FOR COMMUNITIES ACT

The House resumed from November 28 consideration of the motion that Bill C-2, an act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, be read the second time and referred to a committee, and of the motion that this question be now put.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before I begin my comments on Bill C-2, I would like to welcome you and all my colleagues back to the House of Commons from the weeks we had with our constituents and families. I hope everyone had an informative and restful time away from the House, because the debate about the future of the country begins again.

One always hopes, coming out of a time when politicians are separated by great distances and surrounded by friends and family, that we would return to find a new spirit from the government, a spirit in which we could start to renew and rebuild Canada and perhaps find some common ground in order to make our country a better place, which I believe we all begin our political careers hoping for.

Government Orders

Unfortunately, after a very productive debate we just had on a democratic motion from one of the New Democratic members about e-petitions and restoring and enhancing democracy in our Parliament, for which we hope to see some Conservative support, we now move over to an incredibly offensive piece of legislation. This is the first one the Conservatives felt they needed to call. They often have trouble naming their pieces of legislation accurately. We have seen them time and time again borrow from the worst aspects of our neighbours in the south, particularly the Republican Party, which uses the naming of bills to inappropriately stir up feelings and emotions within the public and inaccurately reflect what is actually being proposed in the legislation. We have that here with Bill C-2. An appropriate name for the bill would be “Bill C-2, shutting down InSite”. This is essentially what the bill is meant to do.

For those who are not familiar with InSite, it has become something that the Conservatives constantly and almost vehemently oppose. It is a program run out of the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, one of the most troubled communities in the entire country but also one of our most resilient communities. I spent some time working with people who have been positively affected by InSite, a program started a number of years ago in the nineties. It is a safe injection site and the only safe injection site in Canada.

I know some of my Conservative colleagues who choose ignorance over the facts will use this as some sort of culture war rallying cry, raising money and potentially securing votes by misinforming the people they represent. However, they cannot misinform themselves during the course of this debate, because the facts sit before us. They can choose to have their own opinions, but they cannot choose to have their own facts. What we see in this piece of legislation directly goes against science. It goes against the facts of the matter and the principles that we, at least in the New Democratic Party, think are important. Therefore, I am disappointed that this legislation continues to receive support from the Prime Minister and the Conservative Party. I am not surprised, unfortunately.

However, I am also encouraged because it allows us to talk about such important things as public safety and the health of Canadians. InSite was at the time, and remains, a cutting-edge program, a bold initiative to try to tackle a problem that has been plaguing a community for many years. It is one that has received support, at least in British Columbia and Vancouver, from both ends of the political spectrum. Very conservative mayors and more progressive mayors, like Mayor Robertson, have supported this initiative over the years. It forms one pillar of the four-pillar approach in Vancouver, which has taken on a challenge.

As you know, Mr. Speaker, being from Windsor and having spent some time in Toronto and other Canadian cities, within some of our neighbourhoods there can be a cycle in which crime leads to more crime, open drug use leads to more open drug use, and people stop fighting for their neighbourhoods. They leave. The people we want to move into the community will not do so because they do not feel safe, and communities spin almost out of control. The police are unable to regain a certain amount of public security, and the community ends up looking like one of those communities we fear.

Perhaps there are better examples across the border from your home, Mr. Speaker, in Detroit, where because of economics and

social malaise, entire neighbourhoods are essentially being bulldozed because no one wants to live there.

• (1210)

It costs communities not only the hardship, but many millions and billions of dollars in the end. The Downtown Eastside has seen a renewal and revitalization owing not just in part to InSite and the good work the people there do, but also because of many programs that progressive governments have brought to bear in dealing with issues like housing. The Conservative government would perhaps take note that housing is one of the most affordable and most essential components. The renewal has not been complete, but there is certainly an incredible difference from even 15 years ago when I spent some time working in the Downtown Eastside. It is quite amazing.

Let us deal with the bill, because in Bill C-2 the government has found a new love for public consultation and community input. I look to my colleagues to see if they can think of anything else the government has ever done on which the public's opinion has actually mattered. Those of us dealing with the pipeline politics in northern B.C. and the Enbridge northern gateway would love to hear the Conservative government suddenly have some feeling and concern for the opinion of the public.

For those dealing in the Toronto waterfront, such as my friend from Trinity—Spadina, to hear that the Conservative government actually cares what the public thinks would be remarkable. Right across the country we have seen the government time and time again simply invoke measures, as happened when the Prime Minister changed the age of retirement from 65 to 67. I do not remember that he consulted with Canadians and asked for their opinion, but suddenly, when it comes to a safe injection site, the Conservatives ideologically oppose it. Their opposition is not based on any facts or evidence, even though Conservatives say from time to time they have a new-found love for science.

We asked them to help review with us the 30 peer-reviewed articles and medical journals that have studied the effectiveness of InSite. InSite is supported by the Police Association, by the Chiefs of Police, by the Nurses Association, and by the Canadian Medical Association. These must be some of those foreign-funded radical groups the Conservatives are always crying about, these well-respected institutions of our health and public safety in Canada, but each of these studies has shown time and again that this harm reduction strategy has lowered fatalities due to overdose by 35% since its inception.

Government Orders

A caring Conservative would say there are fewer people dying of drug overdose, and it seems like a good thing. A Conservative who is concerned about public safety would also note that crime has dropped precipitously in the same region over the same time. Therefore, the whole idea that safe injection sites in communities cause the crime rate to go through the roof has proven to be the opposite; in fact, the spread of communicable diseases in that community, a serious public safety and public health issue, has also dropped in that same community in which InSite exists.

Not only must we consider the pain and hardship of those who contract these communicable diseases, we must also consider the public purse and what it costs the already strained public system. It should be every government's intention and work to lower the amount of disease spreading in our communities, and drug relapse for those who have participated in this program is significantly lower than it is in any other program in this country. The addicts who go through the InSite program tend not to get back on drugs nearly as frequently as they do after any other detox or remediation program we have.

All those facts together—public safety, the lowering of crime, the lowering of health costs, the encouragement and support of people in Vancouver and British Columbia of all political persuasions for such a program—should open the eyes of the Conservatives just a little bit.

The medical doctors of Canada support this program, the nurses of Canada support this program, and the police in the city and the province support this program. One would think one of those groups would be of interest to Conservatives, but no, that is not the case. What is of interest is fundraising and ideological warfare. We know that when they introduced the bill, it had not even been debated for a minute in the House of Commons before the Conservative Party sent out a fundraiser to its membership asking them to send money for this great bill.

I remember that when the Prime Minister ran for election after being in a position of minority government, he said to give him a majority and not to worry about any agenda he had, because he would be restrained by the courts. In the case of the Supreme Court of Canada, after three trials at the B.C. Supreme Court, the government took the case to the B.C. Court of Appeal and finally to the Supreme Court. What was the cost to taxpayers? I do not know, but it was millions.

● (1215)

Even after the Supreme Court said that this bill violates charter rights, that it may well be unconstitutional, and that the government is arbitrarily undermining the very purposes of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, which includes public health and safety, that is what the government is doing.

It is not a free and conscious clear-thinking government. It is one driven only by ideology, only by fundraising initiatives, and only by blind faith in some sort of world view that absolutely contradicts the facts in front of us.

We will be opposing this legislation at every step of the way.

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, welcome back to all of my colleagues. Happy new year—

An hon. member: It is Groundhog Day.

Ms. Michelle Rempel: Mr. Speaker, it is not Groundhog Day, as one of my colleagues said.

This is a very important piece of legislation that we are discussing, because it addresses an issue that is very keen and close to a lot of people's hearts across Canada, which is how we help Canadians overcome addictions to these types of substances.

My colleague spoke very passionately about the need to help people overcome them and the best way to do so. That is a debate that is very worthy of the House. I think we all agree that it is an important issue, but what I did not hear my colleague talk about was the impact of these sites on the communities around them. One of the things that we have been talking about in debating this bill is the right of the communities in which these centres are located to have consultation and to talk about the impact on their households and their lives.

I ask my colleague a very honest question: How do we balance that? How do we balance the needs of the community with the needs of folks who are affected by substance abuse?

We have put a lot of policy in place in this government in terms of addressing some of the determinants of how people fall into that type of substance use. Does the member not agree that it is important for us to consult with our communities ahead of opening up one of these sites?

● (1220)

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I welcome my friend back as well. I wonder if we could apply those very same principles to energy policy in this country. I am talking about consultation with the communities that are affected.

Communities that are affected by any government proposals—such as, say, a bitumen pipeline—should be consulted and listened to. That would be a curious thing, because in the consultations that the government has conducted with Canadians over one pipeline in northern British Columbia, if anybody opposed, the Minister of Natural Resources called them foreign-funded radicals.

With response to safe injection sites, let us understand the process of how these things come to be.

The initiative starts from a community that is facing an intractable problem like the one in the Downtown Eastside. The facts of the matter are that in terms of lowering the incidence of drug use in our communities, this works. The facts of the matter are that in terms of lowering crime associated with that same drug use in those same communities, this program works. It has been peer-reviewed by 30 different groups. It is supported by the police, by the nurses, and by the doctors. These groups are concerned with the same things that my friend just raised.

Government Orders

If she does not want to listen to me, that is fine, but she should listen to the groups that have studied this situation. I would also encourage my friend to do as I did and actually visit InSite and talk to the people who work there. She should talk to the clients who go there and to their families. They have seen the success that has happened in this program.

Is it perfect? No. Does it move us further along? Yes. Is there a better idea in this piece of legislation? Absolutely not. Let us not sacrifice the perfect as we seek the good.

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my friend from Skeena—Bulkley Valley for his thoughtful and informed remarks about InSite.

During both the campaigns of 2008 and 2011, I had questions asked of me of InSite. People had this impression that it was like people walking into a Holiday Inn and walking up to a bar where they could order drugs and have a wonderful room in which to sit and relax and take their drugs. I had to inform these people that it is not at all what it is like.

I am taking my friend up on his last comments about visiting InSite and seeing what really goes on there. Perhaps he might tell Canadians the frame of mind that people are in when they go to InSite, what they meet, the welcoming that they have, the opportunities they have for rehabilitation, and all the other things that are afforded those who actually use InSite.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, if we talk to the people who work on the street, the nurses and the social workers, one of the things that they will tell us, and this is clear across Canada, is that getting access to people who are addicted to harmful drugs is one of the most challenging aspects of their work. It is very difficult to access them and get them into those programs, such as the affordable housing programs or the other initiatives that may be coming from the federal government or some of the provincial governments providing health care.

They cannot get access to people, and one of the reasons InSite has been successful is that ability to at least have the initial conversation. Not everybody is ready at the first invitation to start to move off of a destructive lifestyle, but the conversation starts and the relationship starts.

There is not a better idea coming from government. It is not even close. All that we see is this, something that is likely unconstitutional and that breaks our charter. I think we can do better. I know we can do better. We can support InSite, not take it to court and spend millions of Canadians' dollars fighting good programs that save lives.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am just going to pick up from where my colleague left off with his answer to a question about the perceived ideas of what a safe injection site is. My colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley talked about getting access to the addicts as being one of the most difficult things for people working in health care, for people working with folks on the street and for people who are trying to reach out to addicts and help them, whether to access health care or addiction services or housing. How do we actually find the addicts? How do we get to them so we can give them the supports they need?

That is very true in my home community in Halifax. We have this incredible program right now called MOSH, which stands for mobile outreach street health. It is a van with nurses that goes around to where people are. They go to homeless shelters, under bridges and to fields. They go with the van to where they know homeless people are and try to access them and give them some very basic, rough medical attention, and maybe talk to them about the next step. They may talk to them about treatment; there is a doctor down at the North End Community Health Centre. They may talk to them about housing and ask if they know how to access housing. They might connect them to Halifax Housing Help or to Direction 180, which is our methadone clinic in Halifax. Actually having access to people with addictions is a great thing because we can give them the supports they need. We need access to people who are looking to deal with their addiction or become housed or get the health care they need, and safe injection sites are a way to access people with addictions.

My colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley cited some great statistics about how safe injection sites work, such as InSite in particular, and how people who want support—not everyone—can actually get addiction counselling and can transition to a healthier life where they tackle their addictions. That is something we should be doing as a country and as Canadians. We should be helping. We should be thinking about ways to actually help people with addictions instead of just further marginalizing them and making it harder for them.

So why are we here talking about Bill C-2? We are here because, in 2011, the Supreme Court of Canada decided that InSite saves lives, that it offers life-saving services and therefore should be exempt from section 56 of the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, the CDSA. I really think judicial decisions are separate from who we are as legislators, but I read that decision and think it was a victory for evidence-based science over ideology. That was 2011. Here we are now at the beginning of 2014 and, unfortunately, I am standing here debating a bill that is a return of that ideology, and it makes me quite sad that we are actually moving backwards.

This bill is deeply flawed, and it is based on an anti-drug ideology and on fears about public safety that are not necessarily rooted in evidence. The fears are not necessarily real. They are false fears.

What are these fears? My colleague from Guelph was talking about some of these false fears: people think there are raging addicts going around our communities, who get to go into these posh sites and put their feet up and access drugs, and it is like one-stop shopping for addicts; people think that if there is a safe injection site there will be increased drug use; people think there will be more drug users on the street. When I say “people” I do not mean all people, but those are the false fears that exist. They are false fears that drug users are going to terrorize our children and our communities.

Government Orders

Why do I say these false fears are out there? It is because on the Conservative Party website we see that the Conservatives are trying to capitalize on these fears. There is this beautiful page, and I say “beautiful” with a heavy dose of sarcasm. It says, “Keep heroin out of our backyards”. It is a fundraising request. People can sign up, and the big donate button is there to donate to the Conservative Party of Canada. There is a picture of a couple of needles on the ground and people milling around. They are not people in fancy dress shoes or high-heeled shoes. It is apparent that these are the shoes of drug dealers; again there is a heavy dose of sarcasm there.

• (1225)

It is incredible; it is fearmongering. There is a Facebook site that goes with it. If members have some time and they want to get themselves quite exercised about what state the country is in, they should read those comments. They are comments filled with vitriol and more fearmongering. It is incredible. I pulled one comment that said, “Addiction is not a health problem. Addiction...is stupidity”. The vitriol extends bizarrely into saying the civil service should be gagged and put on the EI line. I do not really know where that comes from, but it is out there. That fearmongering is being fueled by the Conservatives.

People may say they do not want a safe injection site in their backyards, but I am going to talk about my backyard in Halifax. My office is on Gottingen Street. Gottingen is a beautiful, strong, vibrant street full of community action and community togetherness. I love the street my office is on, but Gottingen Street has its share of social problems. It is a historically poor neighbourhood. There is drug use and sex work in my community. There is a lot of poverty in this community.

The last time this legislation was up in the House I spoke to it as well. The week before was a riding week and MPs were at home in our constituencies. Just purely by chance that it happened that week, I rode my bike to my office and right on the ground by my bike lock was a needle. I dutifully went inside, got something to pick it up with and took it three doors down to the community health centre, which has a sharps bin. That is the reality of my community. If my community decides it is better to have a safe injection site, then why can my community not make that decision free of interference and fearmongering from the Conservatives?

I was chatting with some folks from the Metro Non-Profit Housing Association, which is located across the street from my office. I did not know this, but they told me that it and other community organizations had rallied together to put a sharps container on a street behind my office where there is not a lot of back and forth traffic nor a lot of people, so it turns out to be a place where people do use intravenous drugs. Bushes provide privacy. It is ideal if someone is looking for a place to do something outside the eyes of the public. The association rallied together and said it would put a sharps container behind these buildings because there is so much drug use. At the very least, kids would not be walking around in the midst of needles and having an accident.

At first I thought that was a great idea. If there are needles, then let us give people a place to put those needles. Then I found out that people were breaking into the sharps container to steal dirty needles. What kind of desperation must one feel to break into a sharps

container to steal dirty needles? What kind of low is that individual at? Where is that individual who thinks that is a good idea and acts on it? Where is that individual when he or she acts on that, when that is the reality?

That is not an awesome thing about my town, but it is real, it exists and it is not going to go away if we just ignore it and do not talk about it. My community says enough is enough. It does not want sharps containers in the café down the street anymore. It does not want sharps containers in all of the community organizations along Gottingen Street. We do not want people shooting up behind the office or behind the health centre. We want to take care of people and offer them the supports they may need. We want to help them if they want to transition away from addiction. Who is to say that we cannot do that?

I will finish with a quote from the Supreme Court of Canada. “Insite saves lives. Its benefits have been proven.” That speaks volumes.

• (1230)

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, having been involved with drug investigations a number of times, I understand where people are coming from with regard to InSite. However, the problem with InSite is not the building per se, but rather that 1.1 grams of heroin cannot be purchased legally in this country. The problem is that it has to be brought to that site in an illegal form to inject it legally within that site. To say that there is no drug dealing going on in east Vancouver or Halifax is really not a fair statement to make because it is still happening. It is just a matter of where the people are injecting.

The question boils down to this. Within InSite or any of these sites, is there a way that your party would ensure that the drug being purchased is safe, because there is no way of proving that right now, and how would you do that?

The Deputy Speaker: I would ask all members to direct their comments to the Chair and not to other members of Parliament, please.

The hon. member for Halifax.

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Speaker, that is a good question and it is complicated. This is not easy stuff. It is not black and white. There are a whole lot of shades of grey here, and so we figure it out.

Yes, there will still be people dealing in drugs if there are safe injection sites. Yes, there will be, but right now there are people dealing in drugs. We have a choice of having a community where there are drug transactions and people dying, or a community where there are drug transactions and maybe not as many people dying. Maybe one person will decide to take advantage of addiction services and will no longer be an addict. If there is just one, I consider that to be a victory.

It is not simple. I am not standing here saying that we have the magic bullet, that we know exactly how to do this and how it should roll out, but I do know in my heart that the first thing we have to do is try to save people's lives. If that is what safe injection sites do, I am all for them.

Government Orders

•(1235)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as my colleague said, parents often have concerns about safe injection sites.

Does my colleague think it is better for a child to see a building without really understanding what goes on inside or to come across an addict shooting up or even a person who died from an overdose in the park where that child plays? Does she think that such activities are better carried out inside a building or in front of a child in a place where parents have no control?

Ms. Megan Leslie: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her question.

I would like to give an example of what is happening here in Ottawa. Perhaps that will help alleviate some of the concerns people in our communities have.

[*English*]

In Ottawa, Campaign for Safer Consumption Sites and the Drug Users Advocacy League came together and opened a mock injection site, where people from the community could see what it was all about. Instead of fearmongering, with pictures of needles rolling around, they said, “This is what it is. Come and talk to our nurses, health experts and people who think this is a good idea. Come on in and see what it is that happens in here”. People get to see the little kits that would be given to people who access the site. It’s a mock site, which helps demystify and dispel the myths, where people can ask questions. We are afraid sometimes, and that is okay. People can go there to ask questions and get educated on the issue instead of just being told that we should live our lives in fear.

We should get educated on these issues, and the Campaign for Safer Consumption Sites has done a really remarkable thing. Not everybody in Ottawa agrees, but it has created a safe space for debate and discussion, and that is a far cry from what the Conservatives are doing.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the members for Skeena—Bulkley Valley and Halifax for speaking to this issue. I am honoured to join them in talking about this bill, which will have a major and very worrisome impact.

I will begin with a fact about what happened in Vancouver between 1987 and 1993. The number of overdose-related deaths at the end of that six-year period was 12 times higher than at the beginning.

That is a spectacular increase over a period of six years. Even if that number had merely doubled, it would still have been a very serious problem.

However, given the Conservatives' attitude toward this bill, the way they want to deal with the problem of hard drug use, and their attempts to undermine the amazing work done by Vancouver's InSite, it is obvious that they are refusing to face the facts.

I would like to mention another significant statistic. Since InSite opened, there has been a 35% decrease in overdose deaths. That is a huge success. Of course it is not enough, but it is a big step forward in dealing with a problem that is beyond the control, and against the will, of drug addicts.

Those are the indisputable facts. They are widely available for anyone to consult. Now, the real debate is about the respect that needs to be shown for the work and the rulings of our courts.

I would like to remind the House that the B.C. Supreme Court, the B.C. Court of Appeal and the Supreme Court of Canada all supported the idea of keeping InSite open because it addresses the dangers related to drug abuse.

The Supreme Court ruled that the minister's decision to close InSite was in violation of the clients' charter rights and that the decision was:

...arbitrary, undermining the very purposes of the CDSA, which include public health and safety.

The government's lack of respect for the country's courts, a pillar of our society, is a very serious issue. It is troubling because it begs the question of how the public can maintain the same respect for, and especially the same confidence in, one of Canada's fundamental authorities.

However, this attitude on the part of the Conservatives comes as no great surprise. In fact, it is very much in keeping with their desire to appeal to their base, as illustrated so clearly in their “Keep heroin out of our backyards” campaign. This approach promotes fear and prejudice and denies reality. All this sorry campaign puts forward as a possible solution is to tell people that in order to guarantee their children's safety on the streets, it is important to keep drug users out of their neighbourhoods. This is an approach worthy of the Far West.

At least the Conservatives have not gone so far as to encourage people to get out the tar and feathers to chase away individuals who are much more in need of assistance than stigmatization to free themselves from their drug addiction.

•(1240)

The Conservatives refuse to address the problems and face reality. Above all, they refuse to support the people and the organizations that are not afraid to be on the ground and take steps to reach out to people and tackle the root cause of the problems. That is what is truly most important.

The NDP believes that any legislation must be based on facts, on empirical and objective data. Above all, it must respect the spirit of the courts' decisions and their interpretation of our fundamental laws.

Of course, the Canadian Human Rights Act is not perfect. Any piece of legislation, anything created by man, can be made better and can be improved upon. However, when this legislation is used as a frame of reference, especially given that it was passed after major debate and that it is based on experiences in countries around the world, then it serves as a foundational text that puts basic principles to paper.

Government Orders

If some elected members of this Parliament lack respect, either for the amazing results of this work or especially for the decisions made in the course of interpreting these laws, then in which direction are we heading?

To cite the Supreme Court decision again, the approach that the government is planning to take with Bill C-2 puts too much arbitrary decision-making power in the hands of the minister. Furthermore, Bill C-2 does not even provide time limits for making a decision on a proposed safe injection site. So, in addition to the minister's disinclination and the onerous procedures that the organizations wanting to open a safe injection site will have to contend with, they are also going to be facing a wall of silence. This decision will be one that is hidden, arbitrary and hypocritical, because neither Health Canada nor the Minister of Health will be subject to any time limits. They will not have to defend their decisions or justify their point of view about any proposal to establish a safe injection site.

This is totally unacceptable. It is unacceptable for any of our institutions or any government representatives to subject a single one of our citizens to arbitrary decisions, inaction or silence.

In conclusion, I would also like to speak briefly about the terms and conditions that would allow the minister to withhold approval of an application to open a safe injection site. They are found in clause 5 of the bill, which is a long list of criteria for refusing the exemption. They are so extraordinary that, taken to the extreme, they could even be yet another way to kill these proposals and put an end to such initiatives.

It is not even a downstream evaluation of the project, that is, after the proponents and those who have decided to set up these kinds of sites have fulfilled all of the requirements; it is something that happens beforehand. It is tantamount to telling people that they can go ahead and do everything in their power and be as professional as possible, but the government will have made up its mind right from the outset. The six principles mentioned, that I will not take the time to read out loud, go so far that they will stop any proposal in its tracks long before anyone can even start working out the details.

● (1245)

I hope that the government members will listen to reason and that for the public good, in the interest of Canadians and for public health in general, the Conservative members will vote against this bill.

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague and those who spoke about this bill earlier.

The complexity of the situation has been mentioned. However, Canada is recognized as a compassionate nation. With this kind of values in our DNA, we must reflect on how we can do more to help people. As we have already seen, InSite in Vancouver met a desperate need among the population.

I wonder if my colleague could elaborate on the importance of showing compassion for people who are addicted to hard drugs. This is also a health issue. These places really focus on health.

● (1250)

Mr. Raymond Côté: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for the question.

This gives me the opportunity to talk about the situation in Quebec City and specifically in my riding, Beauport—Limoilou.

There has been a debate in Quebec City on the appropriateness of, as well as the concerns and dangers associated with, a safe injection site. Clearly, proponents of the project have faced prejudice and resistance, but they have also faced perfectly reasonable, genuine concerns.

I had the opportunity to speak directly to people—but more importantly, to listen to people—from certain organizations that provide direct assistance to really vulnerable people. These people are overcoming hardships like drug addiction, and they often need to take substitutes in order to be able to function. As for the will to beat their addiction, they told me that they did not want to take drugs, but they had a problem and they did want to get help.

However, this requires infrastructure, as well as qualified people who are willing to reach out and provide assistance.

Getting back to my colleague's question, compassion is probably one of the most important aspects. The government needs to show some compassion, and that is how it must approach this problem.

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is actually very simple.

Whenever we talk about supervised injection sites, the subject of parents and protecting children comes up. True, some addicts do come from troubled homes. Others, however, had very good parents who did their level best, but whose children, sadly, became drug addicts for one reason or another.

Let us put ourselves in the shoes of a parent whose child is a drug addict. Would we not feel better knowing that our child has access to a safe injection site rather than constantly worrying about him shooting up in the streets? He could be assaulted or even die on the street, not to be found until two or three days later. A daughter could be sexually assaulted while under the influence of drugs she used in some backyard.

Mr. Raymond Côté: Mr. Speaker, my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue did a nice job of summarizing the issue. This is about keeping vulnerable people safe and about the danger they pose to others. Leaving them to their own devices or making them go away shows no compassion or understanding. It is based on prejudice. It is dishonourable. This bill will create and multiply problems, not solve them or help us deal with them.

[English]

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, GP): Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to be back in the House today, after the recess, not only as the newest member of the Green caucus of Parliament but also, as of today, as the deputy leader of that party.

As we know, we are here to talk about Bill C-2, an Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

Government Orders

It is clear to me, and I believe to at least three-quarters of Canadians, that the party across the way is of the mindset that if a person is poor, or a single mom, or a person of colour, or unemployed, or if the government has unfairly cut off EI, that is that person's fault. That also extends to addictions. If someone is in the unfortunate position of becoming addicted to a substance, all too often caused by the sorts of things I just mentioned, it is entirely his or her fault. Society and the government are not to blame.

We have a government with a punishment attitude. Empathy is often lacking. Understanding of the root causes is often lacking. For those who fall into that class of society and who the government feels are, pardon the expression, "losers", it is their fault.

I do not think I can do better than to read some of the recommendations of the Canadian Nurses Association on why Bill C-2 is a bad idea. They state:

The federal government has the opportunity to create policy founded on the best scientific evidence, while reducing costs to taxpayers, supporting vulnerable members of society, providing essential disease-prevention services and encouraging access to addiction-treatment.

Given the numerous benefits of [safe injection sites] to public health and safety...

If I may interject, the Supreme Court has indicated that it agrees with the nurses on this.

...the [Canadian Nurses Association] recommends

1. that the proposed legislation governing Section 56 amendments to CDSA be withdrawn; and
2. that it be replaced by legislation that creates favourable conditions for the minister to grant exemptions in communities where evidence indicates that [a safe injection site] stands to decrease death and disease.

The legislation must

- recognize access to health services as a human right for vulnerable groups;
- be based on the principles of harm reduction;

It should not cause more harm. It goes on:

- be founded on evidence-based practices in public health;
- be developed in consultation with relevant stakeholders, including people who use injection drugs;
- consider the cost-savings benefits of [safe injection sites] to the Canadian health-care system; and
- provide for reasonable establishment and evaluation periods prior to renewal.

In addition, [the Canadian Nurses Association] recommends that harm reduction be reinstated as a fourth pillar in Canada's National Anti-Drug Strategy. [The Canadian Nurses Association] recommends that the auditor general review Canada's National Anti-Drug Strategy every [decade]. Doing so will not only ensure that the strategy is modified if it is not meeting public health objectives, it will also allow the strategy to integrate recent, effective, evidence-based public health interventions.

We have heard it said on many issues in this House, such as the environment, Statistics Canada, and now this, that Canada needs to have policies based on evidence and science. Today we have legislation, like this, based on an ideology that if one is rich and powerful, one is a winner. The government picks winners. If a person is a loser, it is his or her fault.

●(1255)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague and caucus mate for bringing forward some additional points on the ideology that underpins the bill. I spoke to it before the recess.

One of the things I find most distressing about Bill C-2 is that it is a disguised attempt to bring in, by stealth, measures that would

defeat the purpose the Supreme Court of Canada threw back to Parliament to meet, which was to ensure that the security of the person is protected.

There are more than 40 different so-called conditions before a clinic for harm reduction can be opened in a community, including some that are practically impossible. For example, before they are even able to get permission to open such a clinic, they have to provide the background, resumé, and educational qualifications of the people they plan to hire. This is not a reasonable set of conditions.

I certainly have a lot of sympathy with the idea that a community where an InSite harm reduction, needle exchange program facility would open, such as the one that exists in Vancouver, should be consulted. My view is that Bill C-2 is not a set of conditions for consulting a community. It is a set of conditions for defeating the instructions of the Supreme Court of Canada by stealth.

I wonder how the hon. member feels a community should be engaged in these decisions.

●(1300)

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Mr. Speaker, I agree with the hon. member for Saanich—Gulf Islands that safe injection sites should not go everywhere. They should not go anywhere. There should be community involvement by all the stakeholders. There should be thoughtful, evidence-based decisions based on some clear criteria.

As my hon. colleague has pointed out, at least some of the members of the current governing party, not all, but many, and especially those at the top, do not believe in democracy. They do not really want to listen to the Supreme Court on several issues. We can think of others, I am sure. They are really not interested in a fair voting system. They are not interested in a fair system of parliamentary democracy at all. They are ideologically driven. They are bound and determined to do whatever it takes to gain control and push their own ideological agenda.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the numbers speak for themselves with respect to why the funding should continue for InSite injection clinics. The rate of overdose deaths in east Vancouver has dropped by 35% since InSite opened.

It is about the health and safety of people and the well-being of communities. Those who use InSite services at least once a week were 1.7 times more likely to enrol in a detox program than those who visited infrequently.

Government Orders

Over and over we have heard that it is about the well-being of the community, about the well-being of the person, and about trying to get people into programs so that they can get out of their dependencies.

Does the member think that by removing the funding and not allowing these InSite programs the problem will go away, or will it get worse?

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hard-working member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing for her good question.

It is very clear that this will not be a cost-saving measure. It is very clear to anyone with a brain that doing that kind of draconian thing and forcing people eventually into our prison system, at a cost of \$80,000 to \$120,000 per year per person, is a really dumb thing to do.

Mr. Jamie Nicholls (Vaudreuil—Soulanges, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today we find ourselves debating Bill C-2, a bill that has been given a pet name by the Conservative government that really does not speak to what the bill is about.

I would like to start off with a quote from Martin Luther King, Jr. who once said:

Nothing in the world is more dangerous than sincere ignorance and conscientious stupidity.

I would like to ask each member in this House a question. How many people in this House have actually met and spoken with drug addicts? How many people have been witness to neighbourhoods affected by drug addiction and poverty? How many people would prefer to steer away from these areas? These are pertinent questions to put to the House today.

I remember vividly when I was living on the west coast. I would take weekend visits to Vancouver to visit friends in the Strathcona neighbourhood. I remember walking down streets like Hastings and Cordova during the winter of 1995 and seeing people huddled on doorsteps, people who might have been dead. The rate of overdoses that winter was horrible. One could walk the streets and literally see people dying on the streets. It was devastating.

In the media at the time, figures such as drug enforcement staff sergeant Jack Dop could see the problems that were hitting the streets in Vancouver. They were saying that we had to do something about it. They could see how this scourge was affecting the community, because it was not controlled. It was uncontrolled.

I should point out that at the time, in 1995, the Chrétien regime had instituted cutbacks and a reorganization of Transport Canada that affected the coast guard and ports. It might have been a coincidence that shipments of heroin from Asia increased at our ports during that time of reorganization and cutbacks. It might have been a coincidence, or it might have been related. That is for the House to decide.

This is a complex issue. We know that drugs exist in our communities, that people use drugs. As responsible legislators, we have to respond to this problem in a responsible manner.

I asked before if anyone in this House has known a drug addict. I asked that question because I have known a drug addict. I knew a guy named Johnny. He stayed with us in Victoria for a couple of

months. He was a tree planter. He was a very hard worker, and he was a recovering heroin addict. He had been clean for four or five months, and he had been planting trees in the interior of British Columbia. He worked hard. He was a funny guy and a nice guy. He could play a mean guitar and cook a great meal. We had lots of laughs with Johnny. He was a nice guy, a human being.

Now at the time I met John in 1994, we were living in a poor neighbourhood. It was the North Park neighbourhood in Victoria. It was a pretty rough-and-tumble, poor neighbourhood. It attracted all types of people: students, artists, and coincidentally, drug addicts.

I know that John eventually went back to using, and I lost track of him. He got swallowed up by drugs. He ended up back on the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver. I do not know what happened to him. I do wonder if during that winter of 1995 John was one of those people on the doorsteps who had overdosed and died because there was pure heroin and there was no one there to take care of them.

This is a human story. This was a good guy with a bad habit. There are a lot of good people out there who have bad habits, and they need our help. They need us to stand up for them. That is why we need places like InSite.

Ten years later, when I was doing my graduate studies at UBC, I worked with communities in the Downtown Eastside, primarily in the child care community. I talked to people in that community. They said that their fear was needles in parks and needles found in child care centres. InSite was responding to things like that. InSite was keeping these neighbourhoods safe, because it was centralizing the problem, and it was controlled.

● (1305)

This legislation would promote unsupervised drug consumption sites. They do exist. There are flophouses in communities. They pass under the radar because they are not official. They are drug dens. They could be anywhere in our communities and could pop up anywhere.

InSite creates a centre that is legitimate, controlled, and visible in the community, rather than unsupervised drug consumption sites, which I would contend the government is promoting by trying to make it more difficult for supervised ones to open.

“Keep heroin out of our backyards” is the slogan of Conservative national campaign manager Jenni Byrne. She thinks it is pretty clever. I do not think it is clever. I think it is irresponsible policy on the part of the government to make it more difficult for supervised injection sites to open.

I do not think the bill would eradicate heroin from people's backyards. If we do not have supervised drug sites, we would have unsupervised ones, which I think could be more chaotic, dangerous and have greater criminal elements attached to them. Since they are not controlled or supervised, those criminal elements could flourish.

We need a responsible way to frame these afflicted communities and to help them.

Government Orders

The current government often talks about safe streets and communities. I think InSite contributes to safe streets and communities. As I said, maybe my friend John was one of those who overdosed. If he had been able to go to InSite, then maybe when he had a reaction the people supervising him could have seen that and contacted medical authorities to help him out.

In terms of needles in parks and schoolyards, at least when people are injecting on those sites the needles are taken care of. They are not discarded next to a swing set at a child care centre or in a public park. It is controlled. It is supervised. That is the whole idea around it.

When something like InSite is created, it is a community coming together to say they have to find a solution to this problem. We have addicts in our communities and they need help. They need medical help. They might need psychological help. They might need clean works. A place like InSite provides that. It is a step in a community's deciding to better its environment, not worsen it.

I think this policy is playing a lot on people's fears. They are people who have never met drug addicts and are afraid to talk with people with these problems. As a society we all have to work together to solve these problems. We have to talk to drug addicts. We have to work with them. We have to create points of contact with these people. Otherwise, it goes under the radar and we end up with unsupervised flophouses and drug dens. The criminal element is allowed to flourish because we do not want to deal with it.

By creating places like InSite, we have a point of contact where we start to deal with these problems and with complex questions like the hon. member from the interior of British Columbia asked about. It was a good and pertinent question. However, if we back up and move away from places like InSite, I do not think we are going to ask those important questions complex questions about drug addiction and drug importation in this country.

Through InSite, we can start to discuss these questions. This legislation has offered a chance to debate this issue, and I look forward to questions from my colleagues on the other side concerning this. I do not think we can put on blinders and say that hard drug use in our society is going to go away if we do not do anything about it. Nobody wants a flophouse or a drug den or a crack house next to their house. If you ask anybody in Canada, they would not want that.

InSite creates a community point of contact where these people can get help, be supervised, and where they can be kept healthy. It is a good positive step in the right direction. There is always room for improvement, but we have to start somewhere.

• (1310)

Ms. Roxanne James (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I keep hearing from the NDP that InSite is meant to help people get off of drugs and be no longer dependent, but I have yet to see or hear any statistics which actually show that addicts who have gone to this site have chosen to get treatment, no longer live a life of dependence and have stopped contributing to the illegal drug industry and trafficking in Canada.

Would the member have any statistics to prove that people who use needles to feed their addiction have instead sought the help, are no longer dependent, are free from drugs and are contributing to society and not contributing to supporting the illegal drug industry?

• (1315)

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Mr. Speaker, that is the hope of all Canadians, that people who are addicted to hard drugs such as heroin or crack cocaine should seek help to kick their habit and become responsible contributing members of society. All Canadians hope for that.

We are saying that places like InSite offer the opportunity for them to do that. They are public points of contact, supervised and official. We can actually gather those statistics through working with that community. This is opposed to having unsupervised drug places in society; no one will be able to monitor whether anyone is getting better or kicking their habit. By having places like InSite, we have the opportunity to work with that community to see if we can help them.

In all cases, our hope would be that these people would want to quit using drugs. That is everyone's hope. The reality is that there are so many steps to get to that point and that addiction is a complex issue. Speaking to addicts and seeing their struggles, hardships, and the complexities of their lives, it is not just a one-shot solution, where we build a centre and they will be cured. It does not work that way because drug addiction is a complex issue; it is not a simple issue. However, we have to start working on a multifaceted approach. Places like InSite are a good start. It is not a be-all and end-all solution.

Hon. Mauril Bélanger (Ottawa—Vanier, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am standing to comment on the question by the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness. I have some information that she has been looking for about InSite in particular.

InSite has generated the highest intake of people wanting to get on a program to wean themselves off whatever illegal substance they are consuming. As the members for Vaudreuil-Soulanges and Skeena—Bulkley Valley said, it is the point of first contact. It is not necessarily at the first contact that this is taken up, but it has worked. The take-up of people who have a dependency on illegal drugs in Vancouver is the highest by far from InSite.

The parliamentary secretary may want to take that under advisement because that aspect of the program is working very well.

Government Orders

Mr. Jamie Nicholls: Mr. Speaker, InSite created an opportunity for researchers to look at this, so there are statistics. Dr. Tyndall and a group of other researchers, in 2005, did a study over a one-year period and produced a report in 2006. They found that there were 273 overdoses at InSite and none of them resulted in a fatality. Over that year, 2,171 referrals were made for InSite users to addiction counselling or other support services. InSite created the ability for researchers to monitor and to benchmark the program to see if it was working. They found that it was successful. By having sites like these we can work with this community to learn how to conquer addiction and help people move on with their lives without drugs.

[Translation]

Ms. H el ene LeBlanc (LaSalle— mard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to take this opportunity to extend to you, to all my colleagues and to my constituents in the riding of LaSalle— mard my best wishes for health, happiness and solidarity in the new year.

Before turning my attention to the proposed legislation to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, which the Conservatives have dubbed the Respect for Communities Act, I would like to quote a firsthand account recently published in the *Globe and Mail*:

• (1320)

[English]

As I watch the daily circus and the madness surrounding Mayor Rob Ford, I envy the people of Toronto, who get to watch this on television, read it in the newspaper and listen to it on the radio. They quack about it on Facebook and laugh about it on their daily travels. I envy them because they can change the channel, stop talking about it or turn it off. In my life this is not an option.

My daughter is 23 and she has been an addict, in one form or another, for seven years.

She has snorted drugs, shot them in her arm, smoked them and taken pills. She has had her own version of the “drunken stupor,” and she has even been found with vital signs absent by paramedics.

Contrasted to this is the very bizarre fact that our daughter is also a university student who pulls A grades in every subject. What she desperately wants is to be well.

The family, if the addict still has a family intact, is swallowed whole and suffers immeasurably.

[Translation]

On reading this account, I feel compassion for this mother who goes through this tragedy every day, a tragedy that affects the entire family, even though I cannot fully comprehend this family’s suffering or the suffering of an individual addicted to hard drugs.

Compassion is a value Canadians hold dear. We live in a country with a harsh climate, as today’s weather attests. The population is spread over a vast area. Communities have always survived by helping each other through difficult situations. Similarly, Europeans shared with and forged mutually beneficial ties with First Nations.

Canada therefore became a country in which communities forged close ties with one another. I am fortunate to represent the closely knit community of LaSalle— mard, where a wide range of community groups and volunteer associations never ask whether they should assist those in need or why they need help. They simply roll up their sleeves and extend a helping hand.

Addiction to hard drugs is a complex problem, as my colleagues noted earlier. In Vancouver an innovative approach was developed to help hard drug addicts.

This innovative approach helps persons struggling with hard drug addictions by providing them with a safe place where they can survive. Addicts are given a helping hand and directed to services that hopefully will help them overcome an addiction that slowly kills them.

InSite also has associated benefits, so to speak. By providing drug users with a safe injection site, this service also keeps the neighbouring community safer. As was pointed out, public places are kept free of drug addicts and their syringes. This also helps provide the health care that is so important to prevent the spread of infectious diseases and to give people the help they need.

The current bill would amend the legislation that regulates certain drugs and other substances, but primarily it would affect the way in which supervised injection facilities can be set up. First there was the non-renewal of InSite’s licence, and then there was the ruling handed down by the Supreme Court of Canada on the matter. What happened? The government decided to challenge the Supreme Court ruling and then to comply with it, more or less, by introducing this bill.

This decision and the proposed policy in Bill C-2 garnered a variety of responses. I will mention a few, as follows:

• (1325)

[English]

It’s difficult to imagine a more cynical and dangerous response to a unanimous Supreme Court ruling that Ottawa has a constitutional duty to protect Canadians than the...government’s Respect for Communities Act announced Thursday.

[Translation]

They say that the government, through Bill C-2, also called the “Respect for Communities Act”, is providing a very cynical and dangerous response. The government must protect all of its citizens. What is even more dangerous is the partisan way in which the current government has exploited such a situation. I will continue with the quotation:

[English]

As [the former] Health Minister...was holding a press conference to announce details of the act that sets conditions for new safe injection sites, the Conservative party was emailing its faithful to organize opposition to such facilities.

[Translation]

How can the Conservatives be so partisan when it comes to a safe site that—hopefully—helps improve the health of people who are addicted to hard drugs?

How can they be so cavalier in opposing a unanimous Supreme Court ruling and propose insurmountable barriers that will allow the federal health minister to strike down any initiatives that could improve the lives of people who need them so badly? This is why the NDP will vote against Bill C-2 as it currently stands. We should show compassion and extend a helping hand to these people.

Government Orders

●(1330)

[English]

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I come back to the problem that the issue is not InSite itself. The issue is the fact that one cannot purchase one gram of heroin in our country legally. As a result, anyone who goes out to purchase heroin anywhere does not really know what they are getting. They assume that what they are getting is between 65% and 70% pure heroin, but if they were to get 90% they would be in big trouble.

Therefore, I go back to my continuing question. I would like to hear what the opposition's solution is with regard to heroin itself. There is no arguing that InSite in its present form in East Vancouver is there to assist, but it does not control what is coming in. It cannot. It is not possible for that to happen. Therefore, what is her party's solution from the perspective of controlling heroin that comes into InSite for injection?

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, these questions have been raised a number of times by the government member. He is not addressing any of the facts relating to Bill C-2.

With this bill, the government seeks to put up barriers to an innovative solution that would enable our cities and the rest of Canada to make a meaningful effort to tackle the problem of addiction to hard drugs. This solution would offer people with addictions a safe place where they can receive services that would help them. We must acknowledge this fact. This bill seriously hinders the establishment of supervised injection facilities.

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, when my colleague talks about people who suffer from addictions, I note that she refers to them as if they were persons. They are indeed human beings.

On the other side of the House, it appears that they wish to take away their status as human beings by using terms such as “addict”. If we can show compassion for a mayor who smokes crack and gets drunk on bourbon at City Hall, we should also show a little bit of concern for people who have taken a wrong turn somewhere in their lives and who perhaps really want to overcome their drug addiction, instead of just giving press conferences.

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his comments.

I want to point out that InSite is recognized internationally. My colleague from Vaudreuil—Soulanges called this facility a safe point of contact. The facility will then make it easier for us to understand this very complex issue.

We would rather not see people addicted to hard drugs. However, it is a reality, and InSite helps us to better understand this reality. This is how we will be able to find long-term solutions.

This bill will prevent us from better understanding how this problem develops and will prevent more sites like this from opening in Canada. It will prevent us from answering the call for help from individuals and families struggling with an addiction to hard drugs.

[Disturbance in gallery]

●(1335)

[English]

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the gentleman in the gallery was saying “save Canada Post”. I can tell the House that at the town hall meeting I had last week, a hundred citizens in my riding were saying exactly the same thing. A lot of Canadians are very concerned about the government's mean-spirited destruction of Canada Post—

[Disturbance in gallery]

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, citizens are concerned about Canada Post—

[Disturbance in gallery]

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, for those citizens concerned about the Canada Post closures and Canada becoming the only G7 country without home mail delivery, the NDP is putting forward a motion that every MP will be voting on later this week, asking the government to maintain home service delivery. It is in the interests of Canada and communities across this country. However, we will be speaking about that in question period and in the days to come.

Today, we are called upon to speak on Bill C-2, which is called an act to amend the controlled drugs and substances act, but should more rightfully be called an act to shut down InSite. Members will recall that the Conservative government wanted to shut down InSite. The Supreme Court justices, who are appointed to maintain the rule of law, said no, that it was not in the public interest.

Now we have Conservatives coming back with a mean-spirited bill that attempts to do exactly the same thing. On this side of the House, within the NDP caucus, we say no to that. We stand with most British Columbians, who believe that InSite should be maintained. Why? Because the scientific evidence very clearly points to the importance of InSite.

I grew up in the Lower Mainland. I can recall a time in the early 1990s when we saw a tragic skyrocketing of overdose deaths to over 200 people a year. That is 200 individuals. Conservatives might call them addicts, but many Canadians knew them as fathers, mothers, sons and daughters. These family members were passing away at an alarming rate. InSite was a reaction from the community to put in place a controlled injection site so that we could bring down the number of tragic overdose deaths.

InSite has succeeded remarkably. The number of overdose deaths has decreased by more than 35%. That is an extremely important statistic to know. More importantly, InSite is keeping heroin off the streets and keeping it in a controlled injection site. Study after study has pointed out very clearly that the number of discarded syringes has decreased in the Downtown Eastside and in parts of the Lower Mainland as a result of InSite. Studies show that over 2,000 referrals to addiction counselling are being made every year. In fact, the rate of those who are looking at addiction treatment and who go to InSite is more than twice the average of those who do not go to InSite. What this means, in a very real sense, is that InSite is the first door and the first hallway into addiction treatment programs.

Government Orders

The Conservative government has been equally irresponsible when it comes to addiction treatment and crime prevention programs. What we have seen under the Conservative government are severe cutbacks in addiction treatments and crime prevention programs. What we have is a Conservative government that just does not seem to get the importance that communities place on putting in place effective crime prevention measures and effective addiction treatment measures. InSite is part of that process of finding solutions.

Many of my colleagues in the NDP caucus have spoken very eloquently. We have yet to hear from a Conservative on this issue, at least this year. The Conservatives will ask questions designed to take us away from this issue of InSite, for the simple reason that most British Columbians support it. They have yet to comment on the very compelling statistics and evidence of the success of InSite.

A very compelling result of the success of InSite is the fact that we are now talking about dozens of similar sites around the world, particularly in places like Australia and Europe. There we are seeing the model of InSite, which of course was modelled on other similar facilities, going into other communities. Why is that happening? It is happening because of what comes from having that type of controlled injection facility.

● (1340)

As I mentioned earlier, there are fewer addicts. I go through the Downtown Eastside and past InSite regularly, including last Saturday. So I can see first hand, as a resident of the lower mainland and someone who grew up there, the difference it has made to the Downtown Eastside. There are fewer addicts shooting up in the streets around the area in the Downtown Eastside. There are fewer discarded syringes.

What this has done is to take heroin off the streets to a certain extent. Instead of trying to shut down InSite, many cities in Canada are looking at the possibility of establishing an InSite-type facility. Because of Bill C-2, they cannot seriously look at doing that because, very clearly, the Conservative government, instead of looking at solutions and harm reduction and at expanding addiction treatment and crime prevention programs and allowing, as the Supreme Court very clearly said, a controlled injection site like InSite to exist, is endeavouring instead to shut down InSite by bringing forward Bill C-2.

Canadians, certainly in my area of the Lower Mainland, who have followed the debate, very clearly express support for InSite. Polls show that over 80% of the residents of the Downtown Eastside support InSite. They are the ones who are closest to it. A few minutes ago my colleague from Vaudreuil-Soulanges very eloquently mentioned that the Conservatives need to understand the neighbourhood and the situation before they start putting forward legislation based purely on ideology. There is no doubt about that. The reality is that those closest to InSite support it, some 80%. Most British Columbians support it.

That is not all. Let us look at some of the world's most prestigious medical journals that have looked at the issue of InSite and controlled injection sites and have seen the medical benefits and the harm reduction benefits that come from having a site such as InSite: the *New England Journal of Medicine*, *The Lancet*, the *British Medical Journal*. This is not a question where one member of

Parliament should express his or her personal opinion compared to another member of Parliament's. All members of Parliament are called upon to look at the evidence, to look at the medical professionals and what they say. When the *New England Journal of Medicine*, the *British Medical Journal* and *The Lancet* all say there is real merit in the harm reduction approach embodied in facilities such as InSite, one would think that the Conservatives would be willing to listen, rather than pushing forward what is a very narrow-minded ideology and attacking addiction treatment programs and crime prevention programs. Those things are terrific investments of taxpayer money, because if we spend one dollar on crime prevention or addiction treatment programs, we are saving six dollars later on in policing, court, and prison costs. So it makes a lot of sense from the taxpayers' standpoint to put in place a process and a philosophy where we are saving taxpayer money and stopping the crime from occurring in the first place.

The Conservative government has gutted crime prevention and addiction treatment, and now we see it attacking InSite. It makes no sense at all, except when we look at what the Conservatives have done since they introduced the bill. My colleague from Halifax was very eloquent in this regard: "Keep heroin out of our backyards". The Conservatives have been using this as a fundraising tactic, which is absolutely reprehensible. The reality for anyone who knows the issue is that what the government is doing in shutting down InSite is putting heroin back on the streets of the Downtown Eastside. By shutting down InSite, there would be more syringes in children's playgrounds throughout the Downtown Eastside and throughout the Lower Mainland. There would be more overdose deaths as a result of the current government's mean-spirited drive to shut down InSite. The reality is that there would be fewer addicts looking for addiction treatment programs, because one thing that is clear from every study that has been done on InSite is that addicts are more likely to go into addiction treatment and counselling if they can go to a supervised injection site. It is a two for one proposition: there is twice the possibility they will look for treatment.

That is why, on the basis of evidence, the NDP is voting against this bill.

● (1345)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on a point with regard to InSite.

Stakeholders from all areas became engaged in developing and promoting and putting this program in place, whether the national government back in 2003, provincial governments, municipal governments, local police forces, first alert attendants and users. A strong push was made for it. The community itself was consulted.

InSite has been in place for over 10 years now and the results have been outstanding in their positive impact. The very same stakeholders who helped put it in place are now saying that it has really saved lives and added value to the community in many different ways. Surrounding communities are finding fewer needles on the street and the community is safer. It seems to be an all-win proposition.

Government Orders

In listening to some of the Conservative debate the issue, it would seem to me that they are opposed to safe injection sites period.

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I have no doubt that the Conservatives are now making a concealed attempt to shut down InSite, having seen how they have acted in the past in trying to shut it down and when the Supreme Court of Canada clearly said that it would be irresponsible to do so.

I cannot tell the House what a difference InSite has made to the Downtown Eastside. Being a long-time resident of the Lower Mainland, I will go back in history. It was when the former Liberal government callously destroyed the national housing program that we started to see overdose deaths skyrocketing in the Downtown Eastside. We have seen under both Liberal and Conservative governments very meanspirited policies that have helped to contribute to what has been an appalling abuse of the public.

The reason we are opposing Bill C-2 and are promoting such things as housing being put back in the hands of the public is that we understand that we have to build stronger communities to tackle issues like drug addiction.

• (1350)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a two-part question for my colleague.

The first part of the question is a little sarcastic. I would like to know whether the roles have been reversed in 2014. Since we have resumed debate on Bill C-2, we do not seem to be hearing the Conservative government's position, even though it introduced this bill. On a few rare occasions, a Conservative member rises to ask a question about our suggestions to support an organization like InSite. I get the impression that we are ready to govern and they are ready to cede power.

More seriously, does the member think that an organization like InSite is the first step towards rehabilitation and, eventually, reintegration into the workforce for drug addicts?

Mr. Peter Julian: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Trois-Rivières for the question. He exhibits considerable leadership by saying that the NDP is ready to take up the reins of government. In fact, our party is proving itself up to that task every day by its statements in the House.

The truth is very clear. On looking at the statistics, we note that in a one-year period, over 2,000 users of InSite were directed to counselling services. This has already made a difference. In the case of persons with access to InSite, twice as many addicts go on to follow a drug treatment program as compared to those without access. There is no question that this program is working.

What I find interesting about the last comment by my colleague from Trois-Rivières is that the Conservatives do not have the guts to rise and defend their bill. This bill is indefensible. It is a bad bill.

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to categorically voice my opposition to Bill C-2, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. That is what the bill's title says, but if we read a little further, we see that this bill is really a completely incredible ideological stand

against supervised injection sites. In fact, this is not the first time the government has tried to abolish this sort of site.

InSite is one such site that currently exists in Canada. Much has been said about InSite during the course of this debate. In 2008, it was denied, to some extent, the right to exist because of legislation governing drugs and other substances.

The government tried to put InSite out of business. The matter ended up before the Supreme Court, and InSite was ultimately granted the right to operate. The court recognized that it provided valuable services and called on the government to relax the rules to allow sites such as this to operate and provide much-needed services to the public.

Today is a sad day because we are reopening the whole debate. This bill is nothing short of another attempt to shut down facilities such as InSite. By calling for incredible regulations and requirements, it attempts to discourage people who might want to open this kind of site or offer these kinds of services. Instead of making it easier for sites that have proven their worth to operate — and I will talk more about that later — the Conservatives have decided to hold obstinately to a certain ideology and to try once again to shut down this debate and dismiss such options.

I have listened to several of my colleagues' speeches, and I have heard some rather absurd comments. One Conservative parliamentary secretary expressed concern about the market value of buildings in proximity to any supervised injection sites that could open. If this is the government's main priority, then we can understand their ideological opposition. Never mind that property values may be affected. We are talking about services that save lives. That is the priority. Quite frankly, if our focus shifts to matters like property values, we are all losers and it is clear that we are not on the same page.

I would like to talk about something that happened in my riding and that is reminiscent of the kinds of arguments I heard from the parliamentary secretary. An agency was providing care for people with intellectual disabilities, and not just care, but supervised apartments. The agency had to rebuild completely after there was a fire and the site was inadequate. It faced opposition from the people in the neighbourhood. When the plan was announced, the neighbours were worried that people with mental health problems would be moving in. They were afraid for the value of their homes and the safety of their children.

The city could very well have cultivated their fear to show them it was on their side and could have banned any initiative to provide supervised apartments for these people.

In politics, of course, the easy option is always to use, foster and inflame people's fear in order to prove them right and put an end to a plan, without even examining the facts and the benefits.

Instead, these people sat down, they knocked on doors, and they talked to the residents with reservations to try to change their minds, to provide them with the right information and the facts. Finally, after much consultation and consensus building, the Centre Bienvenu opened its doors. It now provides services for dozens of individuals who need care. People were able to work together to implement these essential services.

Surely members can see the parallel I am drawing with this debate on Bill C-2. The Conservatives could have given information to the people who are afraid of having supervised injection sites in their neighbourhood and shared with them the facts, the statistics, the successes and even neighbourhoods' level of satisfaction with having a supervised injection site close by. Instead, the Conservatives are taking the easy way out, the cowardly way out, if I may say. They are cultivating people's fear and supporting their ideological opposition by putting forward draft legislation like Bill C-2.

• (1355)

I heard another peculiar argument during this debate: according to many Conservatives, supervised injection sites encourage the use of hard drugs. It is unbelievable that we hear these kinds of comments even though there are many studies, whose validity has been proven, that show the opposite is true. The people who go to these sites will go on to detox and are followed by social workers who try to help them reduce their drug use.

When we help school dropouts by providing them with services, are we encouraging students to drop out of school? Of course not. Nobody would say that, because it has been proven and it has been accepted for a long time that young people have problems in school. Rather than ignoring them and throwing them out of our school system, we involve them and offer them appropriate services.

I could give a number of other examples of agencies in my riding, such as the À ma baie youth centre and the La corde centre, that offer motivation and support programs. They do an exceptional job, and I would like to commend them for it.

I heard another strange comment: that safety would be at risk in these neighbourhoods. Some Conservatives on the other side of this House believe that supervised injection sites jeopardize the safety of children and the safety of the neighbourhood. Once again, the opposite is true and it has been proven.

I will continue my speech after question period, and I look forward to it.

• (1400)

The Deputy Speaker: The hon. member will have three minutes and twenty seconds to finish her speech.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

L'ISLE-VERTE

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, when we experience a tragedy like this, there are simply no words. All we can do is lean on one another and know that we are not alone. Tragedies have a strange way of bringing us closer together. When our constituents suffer, we do as well. Every week, as I return to my riding, I go through the tiny town of L'Isle-Verte, along the lower St. Lawrence. There, you can smell the salty air and breathe it in. It really is beautiful.

I find it hard to accept that now, as I go through this town that was struck by a horrible tragedy that no one should ever have to

Statements by Members

experience, I will be thinking about this terrible event that has wounded and left a mark on this beautiful community.

No, when people think of L'Isle-Verte, I do not want them to think of this fire that caused the death of far too many seniors who did so much for Quebec society. I want them to think of the solidarity, friendship, dedication and courage of the women and men who, day after day, are trying to clean up the devastation, console others, mourn and pay tribute to the missing. That is what I will think of as I go through L'Isle-Verte.

On behalf of the Bloc Québécois, I offer my condolences to all of the families affected and to the entire community of L'Isle-Verte.

* * *

[*English*]

JOHN ROSS MATHESON

Mr. Gordon Brown (Leeds—Grenville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am saddened today to note the passing on December 27 of the hon. John Ross Matheson, retired judge and former member of Parliament for the riding of Leeds, which is now part of my riding.

Born in 1917 and injured in World War II, Mr. Matheson became a respected and successful lawyer in Brockville. He was elected to the House of Commons in 1961. Three years later, his knowledge of heraldry landed him an important role on the flag committee. It was his introduction of the red maple leaf with two bars, an idea that was presented to him by Royal Military College Dean of Arts George Stanley, and his insistence on the precise colours of red and white that gave us the flag we so proudly fly today.

Called the father of the Canadian flag, John also played a key role in the establishment of the Order of Canada and saw many other accomplishments in his careers and personal life.

On behalf of all members and all Canadians, I extend the deepest condolences to his surviving family.

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[*Translation*]

FAMILY LITERACY DAY

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to speak on this Family Literacy Day, which is a Canada-wide initiative that has been going on for 15 years now. It is an excellent opportunity for parents to introduce their children to the pleasure of reading and writing.

Let us not forget the democratic aspect of teaching these fundamental skills. Everyone must have the opportunity to understand the world and form their own opinions. I urge all Canadian families to take some time today to visit a library or a literacy organization to promote reading in their community.

Statements by Members

I also want to acknowledge the volunteers who are devoted to the cause of literacy across the country, including in French Canada. I thank the Fédération canadienne pour l'alphabétisation en français, the Table des responsables de l'éducation des adultes et de la formation professionnelle des commissions scolaires du Québec, and Collège Frontière for their hard work. I invite all my colleagues to promote literacy in their ridings.

* * *

[English]

EVELYN ONOFRYSZYN

Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to a community leader who will be greatly missed. Evelyn Onofryszyn passed away peacefully on December 20, 2013, surrounded by her family.

I came to know the passion Evelyn had for the Eckville community as we crossed paths at various events and functions. In fact, during my first trip through Eckville in my first campaign, I was taken straight to meet Evelyn at Blindman Valley Propane Co-op, a place she managed for 40 years, retiring just last year at the tender age of 78.

Evelyn was a dedicated member of the Eckville Hospital Board, Eckville Manor House Board, the local 4-H chapter, the Eckville Chamber of Commerce; a passionate member of the St. Paul's Presbyterian Church and so many other community groups and initiatives. In fact, if there was something going on or a need in Eckville, one only had to go to Evelyn to get things started.

Evelyn gave her best to her community. Unlike most people, she wanted all the benefits to go to those around her. She kept none for herself. Her daughters wrote in the obituary that Evelyn was known to be gracious, diligent, capable, ambitious, wise and a role model for many.

I want to extend my deepest condolences to Evelyn's daughters, Elaine, Sharon, Noreen and Karen; her brothers, Jack and Mark; her sister, Helen; and all of the grandchildren and great grandchildren; our best.

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● (1405)

DOUGLAS SHEPPARD

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-sor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in the House of Commons to pay tribute and to recognize an outstanding citizen, Newfoundlander and Canadian, Douglas Sheppard of Gander, who passed away on December 25, 2013, at the age of 86.

Doug was a very well known, well respected member of our community, who will be forever remembered for his commitment and dedication to the town of Gander. He was first elected to council in 1969, serving as councillor and deputy mayor. In 1981 he was elected mayor and served until 1993. He served on many boards and committees, including the Gander and Canadian chambers of commerce, the Gander International Airport Authority and Gander Lodge 16.

Doug was presented with a lifetime achievement award from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador in 2003.

Doug loved playing cards, especially with his grandchildren. He was a loving husband, father, grandfather, brother and dear friend. In a word, he was a gentleman, a kind and giving person who was always there to lend a helping hand to those in need.

Doug Sheppard was a man who will be dearly missed by us all.

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BUSINESS

Hon. Diane Ablonczy (Calgary—Nose Hill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bloomberg has just released its ranking of the best countries in the world for doing business, and it is big news for Canadians. Our country jumped from sixth place to second. Canada is now challenging Hong Kong for the top spot.

Canada's total business tax costs are the lowest in the G7. In fact, they are more than 40% lower than in the U.S. Why is this big news for Canadians? It is because businesses are a country's job and wealth creators. The more we leave in the hands of entrepreneurs, investors, business people and workers, the more they can create economic growth and jobs that benefit all citizens.

The economic action plan introduced by our first-class Minister of Finance is opening the way to tremendous opportunity for Canadians. It is a blueprint for our long-term prosperity and for maintaining our enviable quality of life.

The world recognizes our success.

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EMPLOYMENT

Ms. Irene Mathyssen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I and my constituents were deeply concerned to learn of the closure of the Kellogg's cereal plant in London. This is yet another devastating blow to the community and will result in another 550 jobs lost from the area.

The Conservative approach to the manufacturing sector is broken. That is confirmed by the abysmal job numbers. Londoners know this first-hand, especially when we look at the government's own data. Since November 2006, there are 11,300 fewer manufacturing and food processing jobs in London and 2,600 more unemployed workers.

As with the Heinz factory, set to close later this year, we are placing families, our farmers and our cities in a precarious position. Farmers produce the food, and people in the cities manufacture it. When we lose the manufacturing plants, we put everyone at risk. It is an economic and food security gamble that benefits no one.

We need a government willing to protect the jobs of our citizens, whether they live on a farm or in a city. Only then can we ensure a strong rural and urban Canada.

WINTER OLYMPIC GAMES

Mr. Dan Albas (Okanagan—Coquihalla, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in less than two weeks' time, the world will be going to Sochi for the Olympic Winter Games.

Among our contingent of proud Canadian athletes will be three Olympians from my riding of Okanagan—Coquihalla. Competing in both the two-man and four-man bobsleigh event is Justin Kripps, from Summerland, B.C. I also congratulate Justin and his brakeman, Bryan Barnett from Edmonton, for winning their first world cup two-man bobsleigh event in Germany this past weekend.

Also competing in Sochi is Matt Margetts from Penticton, who will be competing as a freestyle skier in the halfpipe event.

Finally, Penticton's very own Duncan Keith will return to the blue line as a member of our national hockey team for the second time.

These young athletes are great role models for our future leaders and I ask all members of this House to join me in wishing our athletes the best of success in Sochi.

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● (1410)

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF COMMEMORATION OF THE HOLOCAUST

Hon. Peter Kent (Thornhill, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to mark international Holocaust memorial day and to commemorate the victims of the Shoah.

Last week I had the honour of joining the Prime Minister on his historic tour and visit to the Middle East, where he laid a wreath at Yad Vashem in memory of the six million men, women and children brutally murdered simply because they were Jewish.

I reflected again on the dangers of such hatred and the importance for us and future generations to draw lessons from this dark chapter of world history. I am proud that Canada has become a global leader in Holocaust education, culminating in a successful chairmanship year of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance.

I especially want to note the good work of the Friends of Simon Wiesenthal Center. I encourage everyone to visit the centre's Tour for Humanity mobile tolerance education centre here on the Hill.

Through remembrance and reflection about the tragedy of the Holocaust, we commit ourselves to fighting all forms of hatred and to fulfill our promise: “never again”.

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INTERNATIONAL DAY OF COMMEMORATION OF THE HOLOCAUST

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on this International Holocaust Remembrance Day, Yom Hashoah, we join Canadians in paying tribute to the millions of innocents who died during this dark chapter in history. We remember not only those whose lives were so brutally taken, but we remember and pay tribute to the survivors. Equally important is to remember and honour those who helped save lives during this massive-scale human tragedy.

Statements by Members

Today as we remember, we must remind ourselves of our duty to teach our children and generations to come that it is our solemn responsibility to combat racism wherever we find it. We must fight discrimination whenever and wherever we find it. History tells us those who promote bigotry for political advantage plant the very seeds for the crimes against humanity that in the past led to atrocities of such a massive scale.

When we say “never again”, that is our pledge to ensure that such seeds of bigotry and hate never, ever flourish again.

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UKRAINE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I stand in solidarity with the millions of Ukrainians who have spoken out courageously in support of a free and democratic Ukraine. I condemn President Yanukovich and his regime's heavy-handed authoritarian actions and intimidation of peaceful protesters.

I was deeply saddened by the news of the tragic deaths of innocent activists last week. All officials who are complicit in this violence must be held responsible.

I am calling on the Ukrainian government to cease and desist in its oppression of the free citizens of Ukraine, the silencing of critics, and the intimidation of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. Ukraine's parliament must repeal its undemocratic and draconian martial law. A true democracy cannot function without dialogue, compromise, the right to peaceful dissent, and a legislature that enjoys the people's trust.

Ukraine is at a crossroads: democracy, liberty, and independence on one hand, or Soviet imperialistic totalitarianism on the other. If we do nothing, all that Ukraine has accomplished since 1991 will be for naught. Canada and the world will not sit idly by and watch the illegitimate Yanukovich regime destroy Ukraine.

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[Translation]

L'ISLE-VERTE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday night, in bitterly cold temperatures, a horrible tragedy struck L'Isle-Verte, in the Lower St. Lawrence.

The fire at the Résidence du Havre seniors' home has deeply affected this tight-knit community. Today, many are mourning a friend, relative, or loved one. L'Isle-Verte is overcome with sadness.

I do not have the words to express the pain that the residents are experiencing. I am sure that all members of Parliament, from all parties, will join me in expressing our support for the people of L'Isle-Verte.

I want to commend the dedication of the first responders, who have given their all in these trying circumstances, and I want to offer my most sincere condolences to all the grieving families.

Our hearts go out to you.

Statements by Members

●(1415)

[English]

SUPER BOWL XLVIII

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, history will be made this Sunday when, for the first time in history, a Saskatchewan-born athlete will be playing in the Super Bowl. That is right. Regina's very own Jon Ryan, a punter for the Seattle Seahawks will be suiting it up against Peyton Manning and the Denver Broncos in Super Bowl XLVIII.

Mr. Speaker, I know you understand all of this very well, that Jon Ryan was a superb amateur football player, made it to the pros in 2005 with the Winnipeg Blue Bombers and set a CFL record for the longest average punt over the course of the season, over 50 yards. The reason I know that you know this, Mr. Speaker, is that Jon Ryan is your brother-in-law. I know that you and your lovely wife, Jill, who of course is Jon's sister, will be travelling to the New York area this weekend to watch Jon compete in the Super Bowl.

While I know where your sympathies lie, Mr. Speaker, and who you will be cheering for, I ask all of my colleagues, regardless of their football affiliations, to join with me in wishing Jon Ryan, a true Canadian football hero, all the best this Sunday.

Go, Jon. Go, Seahawks.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL DAY OF COMMEMORATION OF THE HOLOCAUST

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today Canadians join together to honour the memory of the more than six million lives lost in the Holocaust. We also acknowledge those who survived the unprecedented evil of the Holocaust, including many Jewish Canadians; the importance of their stories; and the many who have endured unimaginable suffering with strength and courage.

This year marks the 69th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz-Birkenau and we pledge that never again will we be indifferent to the incitement of hate or silent in the face of evil.

In spite of everything we have come to learn of the Holocaust, we as a society must never stop working to educate others and combat hatred and bigotry in all its forms. While this is a day for solemn remembrance, it is also a poignant opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to never again allow such horrors to occur.

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UKRAINE

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the situation in the Ukraine is grave, and the slow, insidious creep of tyranny is evident. The elite few subordinate the future of Ukraine for their own selfish interests. These same elites, masters of those members of the regime, repeal democratic laws blindly. Stalin once called people like this "useful idiots".

We are witnessing a regressive and brutal regime stripping away the pretense of democratic governance, overlaying Orwellian measures on media, and using cellphones to locate, target, and intimidate individuals. This is right out of *1984*. This is no longer

just about the rejected EU deal. It is about civil liberties, democratic will, fair and transparent elections, and selective justice through which opposition leaders are not jailed. Most importantly for Ukrainians, it is about culture and identity. Ukrainians are struggling for hope, for a future that they can be proud of, and for a nation that is secure and democratic.

This Prime Minister and all Canadians stand with the Ukrainian people. *Slava Ukraina*.

* * *

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a new budget is only a few weeks away, but the Minister of Finance is busy cleaning up the mess he created in last year's budget. He has admitted that the government was wrong and finally he is reversing the insensitive tax on hospital parking. After a year of targeting credit unions, he is finally planning to clean up the mess the Conservatives made there.

While the Conservatives are busy trying to fix the messes they created, New Democrats are putting forward ideas that will make life more affordable for Canadians. Canadians continue to get squeezed by unfair banking charges and predatory credit card interest rates, and gouging is still happening at the gas pumps.

Canadians deserve better. They know that it is only the NDP that will fight for good jobs and a more affordable life.

* * *

●(1420)

[Translation]

L'ISLE-VERTE

Mr. Jacques Gourde (Lotbinière—Chutes-de-la-Chaudière, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a terrible tragedy struck the municipality of L'Isle-Verte on Wednesday night and into Thursday morning. Thirty-two people are missing after a fire destroyed the Résidence du Havre seniors' home. The unthinkable has happened. These women, men, mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers and friends have left those who loved them, their families and their community, to wrestle with sadness, pain and bewilderment.

Today, let us remember those founders, the people who spent decades building the municipality of L'Isle-Verte. We must hold on to the happy memories when a tragedy such as this strikes. Together, the people of L'Isle-Verte will get back on their feet, cherishing the memories of their loved ones.

I would also like to commend the dedication and excellence of the teams of first responders who have been working tirelessly since the fire, despite the cold and the difficult conditions, sifting through the rubble so that families can deal with their grief. Our thoughts and prayers are with them.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[Translation]

NEW MEMBER

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the Clerk of the House has received from the Chief Electoral Officer a certificate of the election and return of Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg, member for the electoral district of Bourassa.

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NEW MEMBER INTRODUCED

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg, member for the electoral district of Bourassa, introduced by Mr. Justin Trudeau and Mr. Marc Garneau.

* * *

[English]

NEW MEMBER

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the Clerk of the House has received from the Chief Electoral Officer a certificate of the election and return of Mr. Ted Falk, member for the electoral district of Provencher.

* * *

NEW MEMBER INTRODUCED

Ted Falk, member for the electoral district of Provencher, introduced by the Right Hon. Prime Minister Stephen Harper and the Hon. Shelly Glover.

* * *

NEW MEMBER

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the Clerk of the House has received from the Chief Electoral Officer a certificate of the election and return of Ms. Chrystia Freeland, member for the electoral district of Toronto Centre.

* * *

NEW MEMBER INTRODUCED

Chrystia Freeland, member for Toronto Centre, introduced by the Mr. Justin Trudeau and the Hon. Carolyn Bennett.

* * *

• (1425)

NEW MEMBER

The Speaker: I have the honour to inform the House that the Clerk of the House has received from the Chief Electoral Officer a certificate of the election return of Mr. Larry Maguire, member for the electoral district of Brandon—Souris.

* * *

NEW MEMBER INTRODUCED

Larry Macguire, member for Brandon—Souris, introduced by the Right Hon. Stephen Harper and the Hon. Shelly Glover.

Oral Questions

ORAL QUESTIONS

[Translation]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by extending my best wishes for 2014 to you and your extraordinary team, which operates primarily under the guidance of Madam Clerk, who is always there with her staff to make our democratic lives run so smoothly and efficiently.

[English]

Can the Prime Minister update the House on the deeply troubling situation in the Ukraine and what action Canada is taking to play a positive role in resolving this matter?

[Translation]

The situation in Ukraine is very troubling. Can the Prime Minister update Canadians regarding the latest developments and tell the House what Canada intends to do to resolve this crisis?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has already condemned the actions of the Ukrainian government.

[English]

Mr. Speaker, as you know, this government has been very outspoken with many around the international community in condemning some of the actions of the Ukrainian government. We are very concerned that these actions speak of not moving toward a free and democratic Euro-Atlantic future but very much toward an anti-democratic Soviet past. We will continue to vocalize our concerns to work with the Ukrainian Canadian community and our allies to take all appropriate actions necessary to encourage the government of Ukraine to move in a positive direction.

* * *

[Translation]

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the Prime Minister for his response.

[English]

Earlier this month I wrote the Prime Minister about the deepening tragedy of suicides in Canada's military. The total number of deaths due to suicide in the last two months alone now stands at eight. That is eight in two months.

Will the Prime Minister make this growing crisis a personal priority?

[Translation]

Will the Prime Minister make the suicide crisis among Canadian soldiers a personal priority?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have stated many times, this government has invested record amounts in the mental health of our veterans and soldiers.

*Oral Questions**[English]*

Canada has some of the most developed programs in mental health for people in the armed forces in the entire world. Obviously, we are concerned about individual cases and express our deep sympathies to those involved.

What I think remains very important is that our military people should be aware that mental health challenges are very real for people throughout society, including in the military. Supports are there, and we encourage those who need support to come forward.

* * *

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, with the budget approaching, will the Prime Minister make good on his promise in last fall's throne speech to rein in basic banking fees at ATMs and on credit cards? Will the Prime Minister keep that promise to Canadians, yes or no?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has expressed, on a number of occasions, our concerns with the effect of certain banking fees and practices on consumers and small business. We have taken various actions in the past, and we will continue to work with Canadians to take the appropriate actions in the future.

* * *

• (1430)

ETHICS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Privy Council Office, which reports directly to the Prime Minister, has just refused to release 27 of 28 documents about the expenses of Senators Duffy, Wallin, Brazeau and Harb. I have a very simple question. Is the Prime Minister going to release those documents, yes or no? If he has nothing to hide, why will he not release them?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, access to information requests are handled by independent public servants and by lawyers who make those judgments according to the law. Obviously, it is up to them to respond in the appropriate manner.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Privy Council Office is under the direct authority of the Prime Minister. Those people can say what he is allowed to not release. They cannot stop him from releasing something in the public interest. Why does he not release them if he has nothing to hide?

[Translation]

Former Liberal senator Mac Harb is also under criminal investigation for fraud in connection with the sale of 99.99% of the ownership of his home near Ottawa to a diplomat from Brunei, Magdalene Teo. Ms. Teo told the RCMP that she has a personal relationship with the former Liberal senator, but she is refusing to help with the investigation.

Will the government force Brunei—

The Speaker: Order. The right hon. Prime Minister.

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just like with access to information, the RCMP has an investigative process. The government does not interfere in that process. We put our complete trust in the RCMP to handle this investigation.

* * *

*[English]***INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS**

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Canadians are worried because they know they need training to get good jobs. However, the provinces have rejected the Canada job grant, the signature economic policy of last year's budget. No wonder, the program would cost more money and help fewer people.

Will the Prime Minister finally listen to the premiers and abandon his failed plan?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unlike the Liberal Party, we think it is necessary for the Government of Canada to act directly to deal with job creation and a skills mismatch in the labour market. We provide significant support directly to the provinces for post-secondary education and for skills training.

This government remains absolutely committed to the notion that to address some of these problems we need to get employers and institutions and individuals who are looking for work working together to fill jobs that can be filled.

[Translation]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, each province has its own unique challenges when it comes to the job market. This government came up with an unacceptable policy program that the provinces rejected wholesale.

When will the Prime Minister drop his paternalistic approach and work with the provinces to help Canadians get the training they need to find work?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this government has already transferred massive amounts of money to the provinces for post-secondary education and skills training.

However, there is still a shortage of some skills in the job market, and we have to solve this problem if we want to create jobs. Obviously, our thinking differs from the Liberal Party's. We think that it is also our responsibility to support job creation for Canadians.

[English]

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear on this. The Canada job grant was the government's signature economic policy of the last budget. It spent millions of taxpayer dollars on partisan ads boosting it, but it is a mess. It was rejected by the provinces. It will cost more and help fewer people.

Will the Prime Minister listen to the premiers and scrap this plan?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I noted that the Canada job grant was in fact very well received by those in the marketplace, by people who want to upgrade their skills, want to receive more training, want to gain jobs, and by employers who want to create jobs.

For that reason, we remain fully committed to ensuring we do everything we can to build upon the very good job creation record of this country and to make that record even better.

* * *

• (1435)

[Translation]

ETHICS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, has the Prime Minister had any contact whatsoever with the RCMP since we last met here in the House before the holidays?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I and the RCMP have said many times, this government will give the RCMP any information that it requests.

[English]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP has submitted documents, emails, in Federal Court, where Nigel Wright states that the Prime Minister gave the good to go on the deal with Duffy.

If that is not true, the question is, did the Prime Minister so inform the RCMP?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on the financial transaction, the RCMP is investigating. The RCMP itself has been very clear that I had no knowledge of that.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Great answer, Mr. Speaker. It just had nothing whatsoever to do with the question.

There is another Nigel Wright in this whole scandal. It is the Prime Minister's chief fundraiser sitting in the Senate, Irving Gerstein. On page 12 of the RCMP documents, Nigel Wright tells police that Senator Gerstein approved the initial \$32,000 payoff to Mike Duffy.

Why then is Mr. Gerstein still sitting next to the Prime Minister in the Conservative caucus?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the RCMP has made very clear that there are two individuals under investigation. The individual referred to by the leader of the NDP is not under investigation.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, he is in the caucus, and here is the problem. Is the Prime Minister's position that giving a \$90,000 payoff to sitting Senator Mike Duffy is morally reprehensible, but approving a \$32,000 payoff is good to go?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, again, the leader of the NDP knows that those facts are not accepted. As a matter of public record, the individual he is making accusations against is not under any investigation.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in June 2012, Conservatives replaced Arthur Porter, the disgraced chair of the CSIS watchdog committee, with Conservative Chuck Strahl. We were already concerned about CSIS spying on Canadians and environmental charities that had the audacity to be critical of Enbridge's northern gateway pipeline proposal. Then we learned that Mr. Strahl was moonlighting as a paid lobbyist for who? For Enbridge, the same company that this watchdog was meant to be protecting.

Mr. Strahl was forced to resign. But why did no Conservative recognize this blatant conflict of interest?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Mr. Strahl was not only not forced to resign; the Ethics Commissioner said very clearly there was not a scintilla of evidence that he had done anything wrong whatsoever.

Chuck Strahl is one of the most honourable and decent people I have ever worked with in the Parliament of Canada. It is a shame that for the sake of his personal reputation, he decided he is no longer willing to provide his services.

Ms. Megan Leslie (Halifax, NDP): Mr. Speaker, speaking of questionable ethics, recently the member for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke had the bright idea to campaign against the incandescent light bulb. She tried to turn the light out on her own government's legislation. Not only did she campaign against her own party's policy, if we go to the website, we can donate. Where does it bring us? To a Conservative riding association.

This clearly breaks the rules. The question is: What sanctions is this member facing for breaking the rules?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, the members of this caucus are working day in and day out to represent their constituents. In this particular case, the member wanted to express an opinion that had been brought to her by her constituents.

As the members opposite know, on this side of the House, we are very free to represent our constituents, as is evidenced by our voting patterns when private members' business comes before the House. Unlike the opposition, which is whipped for every private members' vote, on this side of the House, we consider everything, we vote our conscience, and we do what is right for our constituents.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, talk about turning out the lights on accountability.

The principle of ministerial responsibility is a fundamental of the Westminster system, but the Conservatives have turned this on its head. They give their ministers a "get out of jail free" card any time they need it. The latest to make use of it is the Minister of Canadian Heritage.

Has nobody told her that she cannot charge admission to the very groups coming to her for grants? What sanctions will the minister face?

Oral Questions

●(1440)

Hon. Shelly Glover (Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said clearly on a number of occasions, I had absolutely nothing to do with the planning of this event. I proactively and very swiftly took action to address the situation, and I proactively reported it to the Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner.

While she is doing her examination, I am happy to help her with her work.

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that was great. I think we could get her a third-party manager just to help her in helping the Ethics Commissioner with her work.

The Conservative government is under investigation for a cover-up in the Prime Minister's Office. On December 19 the Prime Minister was asked about plausible deniability in his office. He said:

Yeah, well, Mr. Wright knows full well that I don't believe in that doctrine.

Can the Prime Minister tell us, when did he made that clear to Mr. Nigel Wright?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have said on a number of occasions, and as the Prime Minister has said, the moment he found out about this, he instructed his office to work with and assist the RCMP in an investigation. It is quite clear from the number of emails and the information that has been turned over that we are continuing to assist the RCMP in this investigation.

I would also like to take a moment to congratulate the member for recognizing all of the investments we continue to make across northern Ontario. Over the holidays, he issued a press release outlining the number of investments we have made in his riding. I congratulate him for recognizing that. Unfortunately, he voted against all of those investments, but we will continue to invest in northern Ontario to create jobs and economic growth in the area.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last Wednesday, the NDP received a response to an access to information request regarding the Privy Council Office's documentation on senators Duffy, Wallin and Brazeau.

The problem is that the response was a series of blank pages. It is not that the Privy Council Office does not have the documentation, but that it does not want to share it.

What is the Privy Council Office hiding, and at whose request?

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, rules with respect to access to information are handled and requests are made by independent public servants. The information that is required is made by those individuals, following the law.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is deep anguish in Canada about the Yanukovich regime in the Ukraine and its attacks on human rights and freedoms.

Beyond general statements about considering options with respect to Yanukovich, will Canada specifically, one, send official observers to scrutinize what is going on; two, provide expedited visas to any victims who need to leave that country for their own safety; and three, target Yanukovich and his crowd with personal sanctions, asset freezes, and travel bans, for example, to push them to stop their anti-democratic behaviour?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have been active on this file. I can tell him that the minister has condemned, in the strongest possible terms, the killing of protesters by the Ukrainian police force. He has personally spoken to Ukrainian Foreign Minister Leonid Kozhara. In addition, the deputy minister has called in the Ukrainian ambassador to express Canada's condemnation of the violence that has occurred.

We fully support the efforts of the members for Etobicoke Centre and Selkirk—Interlake to bring this issue forward for emergency debate in the House of Commons. We are urging the Ukrainian government to find a political solution by engaging in a real dialogue.

We stand with the Ukrainian people, who courageously continue to speak out in support of democracy.

* * *

[*Translation*]

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Emmanuel Dubourg (Bourassa, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, December's disastrous employment statistics should serve as a wake-up call for this government.

Today there are 275,000 more unemployed Canadians than before the recession.

The Conservatives' solution is to run an ad campaign to promote an employment program that does not even exist.

Will the minister come up with a real plan to help unemployed Canadians in his upcoming budget?

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his first question in the House.

Our government is focused on the creation of jobs. In fact, over one million net new jobs have been created in Canada since July 2009, since the end of the recession. Over 80% of those jobs have been in the private sector.

For the sixth straight year, the World Economic Forum ranked our banks the soundest in the world. As members know, it was just last week that Bloomberg rated Canada the second best place, after Hong Kong, in the world in which to do business.

Oral Questions

●(1445)

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in December, young Canadians lost another 12,000 jobs. There are 264,000 fewer jobs for young Canadians today than before the downturn.

Canadian youth struggle to find work, and Canadian parents struggle to pay the bills. Instead of wasting millions of tax dollars to advertise a jobs program that does not even exist, will the Minister of Finance admit there is a problem and commit to a real jobs plan for young Canadians in the upcoming budget, or is he so out of touch with young Canadians and their struggling middle class families?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have triplet young Canadians who would disagree with the member.

We have a great job creation record in this country, the best among the western democracies since the end of the recession. As I said a moment ago, they are mainly full-time jobs. That is something I think best serves young Canadians well. We also have a good education system. That serves them well as well.

* * *

NATIONAL DEFENCE

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are witnessing an urgent and growing need for better access to mental health services for Canadian Forces members. However, the hiring of mental health professionals was stymied by internal red tape and budget cuts. Under the Conservatives, we are not meeting the needs of the military. This is unconscionable. Military suicides have shocked the country.

The Leader of the Opposition has asked the Prime Minister to make this a personal priority. Will he now do so?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this certainly has been a priority for this government and our armed forces. Our thoughts and prayers go out to all those who have suffered and to the families who have suffered in these instances.

With that being said, we do take the issue very seriously. We are reviewing whether further enhancements are needed to ensure that the armed forces are responding to the needs of its members and veterans.

[Translation]

Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a matter of respecting our troops.

With the current crisis in the Canadian Forces, it is extremely urgent to take concrete measures to address mental health. Our requests are clear, namely to make hiring mental health professionals a priority and to speed up the work of the 50 or so commissions of inquiry into the suicides of Canadian Forces members. We have to give the families the answers they are looking for to help them in their grieving process.

What is the minister's response to this?

[English]

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is the same answer I just gave to her colleague. We will continue to make this a priority, because that is entirely appropriate.

What she and the members of her party could do is start supporting the efforts that we have made to support our men and women in uniform and our veterans. That would certainly be a welcome change. I think everybody would appreciate that.

* * *

*[Translation]***VETERANS AFFAIRS**

Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the budget for this is simply inadequate. It is not just the delivery of services to our troops that is affected by the Conservatives' cuts.

This week, the Conservatives are closing eight Veterans Affairs offices. Many veterans will no longer be able to have their file properly processed in their own community.

Does the minister realize that these human resources that are being cut absolutely cannot be replaced by voice mail or a website?

[English]

Mr. Parm Gill (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has made substantial investments to support Canada's veterans, including almost \$5 billion in new additional dollars since taking office. This funding has been put toward improved financial benefits, world-class rehabilitation, and tuition costs to help veterans transition to civilian life.

While our government is making improvements to veterans' benefits, the Liberals and the NDP have voted against this new funding for mental health treatment, financial support, and home care services.

●(1450)

Mr. Peter Stoffer (Sackville—Eastern Shore, NDP): Mr. Speaker, what utter nonsense. The fact is, these offices provide invaluable services to the heroes of our country. Those offices that are closing on Friday will no longer be able to deliver that one-on-one personal care that the heroes of our country so rightfully deserve. The offices are closing on Friday, but the government has a chance to do the right thing. Many veterans are on the Hill this week. Many veterans, RCMP members, and their families across the country are watching the government closely.

Will the government now do the right thing, reverse that decision, and keep these offices open so the heroes of our country can get the valuable service they so rightfully deserve?

Mr. Parm Gill (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has created 600 new points of service across the country to assist Canadian veterans. Canadian veterans have access to 17 operational stress injury clinics across Canada to help them rehabilitate from service injury. Critically injured veterans do not have to drive to a district office. Our government will send a registered nurse or a case manager to visit them in the comfort of their own home.

Oral Questions

Veterans who are seriously injured can count on their government to shovel their driveways, clean their homes, and cut their grass so they can remain in their homes comfortably, with the dignity and respect that they deserve.

* * *

FINANCE

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since 2006, our Conservative government and our Minister of Finance have brought forward eight consecutive budgets to promote a low-tax plan to create jobs and economic growth in Canada, including over one million net new jobs since 2009. But the economy remains fragile, and Canada is not immune to those economic challenges beyond our borders. We need to move forward with a low-tax plan for jobs and growth, not an NDP plan of higher taxes and massive deficit spending.

Would the Minister of Finance inform the House as to when our government will present budget 2014?

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our Conservative government is focused on what matters to Canadians; that is jobs and economic growth. Economic action plan 2014 will continue our government's focus on keeping Canada's economy stronger by introducing positive measures to grow our economy, create jobs, keep taxes low, and return to balanced budgets in 2015.

I am pleased to request the designation of an order of the day for the Minister of Finance to present economic action plan 2014 on Tuesday, February 11, 2014 at 4 p.m.

[Translation]

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I hope not to have to read the details of the budget in *The Globe and Mail* this year.

While the Minister of Finance keeps trying to fix the mistakes in his last budget, Canadians are paying the price. The number of job losses increased in December and the unemployment rate went up.

Instead of making cuts to employment insurance and announcing measures on the fly, measures they will have to reverse in their upcoming budget, will the Conservatives make helping the unemployed a priority in the upcoming budget?

[English]

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, that is precisely what was done by this government in January 2009, which resulted in a large deficit but did protect Canada.

It protected Canada from double-digit unemployment, much better than other western democracies. We have kept our promise to get back to a balanced budget in the medium term, which we will in 2015.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it just shows what an effective opposition can do to force the government to take action. When it is time to act, the only action the Conservatives take is to attack the unemployed as if they were the problem.

Canadians are unhappy about the mess Conservatives have created with EI. Even the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans recognized that people are angry and are leaving her province because of it.

Will the Conservatives stop sitting on their hands and do something about the harmful impact of their own actions on the unemployed?

• (1455)

Hon. Jim Flaherty (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I was here in 2009. I think the hon. member was also.

She and her party voted against that budget. That was the budget that kept Canada out of double-digit unemployment, which brought Canada out of a recession the fastest of all the western democracies, after only three quarters. How short memories can be.

* * *

[Translation]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, given the Conservatives' spotty memory, I think we should remind them about what is happening today.

The Conservatives have no plan whatsoever when it comes to the rail system and rail safety. Freight transportation is far from safe, and all of eastern Canada is about to lose its VIA Rail passenger service. Gaspé has already lost this service. Now, CN's plans to abandon a rail line in New Brunswick will leave thousands of people without service.

Will the minister explain to Quebeckers and eastern Canadians why they do not have the right to safe and reliable passenger rail service?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, VIA is an independent corporation from the Canadian government, and as such it takes its own decisions when it comes to the provision of services across this great country.

However, that being said, I am very proud that we do have great outreach, both within Transport Canada and my office as well, in talking to Canadians across the country. I can say one thing, that we do listen and do hear what people are saying.

However, the fact of the matter is that if people are not utilizing the service, it is not for the rest of the country to supplement it.

[Translation]

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, VIA Rail needs tracks to run on.

The Conservatives did nothing when VIA Rail dropped Gaspé. The Government of New Brunswick and CN invested \$25 million each in the rail line that connects Moncton to Miramichi and Bathurst to Campbellton. When CN abandons the line between Miramichi and Bathurst, all of eastern Canada will find itself in the same predicament.

Oral Questions

The province repeatedly asked the federal government for help to keep this line, but the Conservatives did not provide any financial assistance.

What will the government do to keep VIA Rail's east-west line through Miramichi and Bathurst? Where are the Conservative members—

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Transport.

[*English*]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that our government supports a VIA Rail system that provides excellent service to passengers, but at the same time is respectful of the efficient use of the taxpayer dollar.

Unfortunately, VIA has to make decisions all the time when it comes to the provision of passenger service, based upon the volume of people utilizing the service. I encourage the member to talk to VIA about the provision of service, and I would like to thank the member for his question.

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ELECTIONS CANADA

Mr. Scott Andrews (Avalon, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in November 2010 the Conservatives held a tele-town hall in the tightly contested Vaughan byelection. Once again, the Conservatives are over-spending in elections, since this was never reported to Elections Canada by the now Minister of International Cooperation. Apparently, 15,000 people took part in this town hall. What was the big draw? None other than their buddy, Mike Duffy.

My question is for the Minister of—

The Speaker: Order, please. I have not heard anything at this point that has to do with government business. The member has a few seconds left. I urge that the question actually touch on the administration of government. I will allow him to finish his question, but I do hope that it actually addresses ministerial responsibility.

Mr. Scott Andrews: Mr. Speaker, yes, my question is for the Minister of State for Democratic Reform. Can he confirm that Elections Canada is actively investigating this breach?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course Elections Canada governs itself and will make its own determinations.

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, Conservative candidates appear to have a big problem respecting election campaign laws. This question will relate to government business.

There is a long list of Conservatives who have been caught cheating on campaign spending and reporting, and they got little more than a slap on the wrist for it. The Vaughan telephone town hall is just the latest example of systemic campaign rule breaking.

Can the minister tell us if the long-delayed Elections Act amendments will include serious penalties for those who violate campaign spending limits, finally?

• (1500)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the bill that the member mentioned will be introduced in time for implementation before the next election.

* * *

GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, how much of our money is the current government going to waste? That is the question that people in my riding are asking. They are sick of seeing these non-stop economic action plan ads on TV. Yet, the Conservatives keep spending our money on them. The \$10 million that was budgeted to brag about it was not enough. They blew that budget, spending \$14.8 million of taxpayer money on blatant self-promotion. When is it going to stop?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the responsibility of any government is to communicate with the population on the plans and priorities and policies that are actually passed by Parliament. It is our obligation and indeed our pleasure to do so. Of course, we want to inform Canadians about the great economic policies that are found each year in the budgets, and we will do so again I am sure.

However, the hon. member should look within his own house. Speaking of advertising, the New Democrats had hundreds of thousands of illegal advertising at their last convention. How about that? That is a violation of trust, I would say.

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we are talking about taxpayer money.

[*Translation*]

It is completely ridiculous. The Conservatives are running ads to promote programs that do not even exist. Advertising Standards Canada has indicated that these ads constitute false advertising. The Conservatives have not put a single penny into TV advertising to make people aware of the importance of getting the flu shot, for example. Conservative propaganda is more important than public health. Will the Conservatives stop wasting money on improving their image?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have already said, the government's responsibility is to make Canadians aware of programs and services that are important to them. In the 2012-13 economic action plan, advertising was an essential means for informing Canadians about the policies passed by this Parliament.

Oral Questions

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Ted Falk (Provencher, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what an honour this is. Last week, our Prime Minister made history by being the first Canadian Prime Minister to address the Knesset. His trip to Israel reinforced the close friendship between our countries and our partnership and the solidarity that exists between our countries on a range of global issues. Israel has no closer friend than Canada. Our government is committed to advancing a principled foreign policy that is based on the values of freedom, human rights, democracy and the rule of law.

Can the Minister of Natural Resources please update this House on the Prime Minister's recent trip to Israel?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome again the member for Provencher.

I was honoured to join the Prime Minister on his historic visit to Israel, a friend and ally with whom we share the core values of freedom, democracy and the rule of law.

The Prime Minister's extraordinary speech in the Knesset, the receipt of an honorary doctorate, the moving visit to the Holocaust museum in Yad Vashem and the Western Wall were among the memorable visits. I was also encouraged by the potential to build our bilateral trade and co-operation in science and technology and our overall strategic relationship.

* * *

PUBLIC SAFETY

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last month's ice storm was devastating across the whole of the greater Toronto area. Citizens of the GTA are looking to their national government to be there with them in their time of need. GTA mayors and regional chairs voted unanimously to ask the provincial and federal governments to help cover the estimated \$275 million cost.

Will the government confirm it will release the necessary funds through the disaster financial assistance arrangement and support the GTA?

• (1505)

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have a program that is working with all provinces and territories. It is the disaster financial assistance arrangement. It is a cost sharing program with a threshold that is triggered. This is a non-political program that is working very well for all parts of the country. We will always stand by provinces and territories who need help, while following the rules of this program.

* * *

EMPLOYMENT

Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have here a list of 35 qualified construction workers who were refused work at the new women's hospital project in my riding because temporary foreign workers are already doing the job on a phoney permit that they should never have received.

The Prime Minister says he is getting tough on foreign worker fraud, yet they have known about this situation for more than 10 months. There should not be a single foreign national on that site if there is a single qualified Canadian ready and able to take that work. Why will the minister not stand up for Canadian workers, tear up this bogus permit and let the Canadian taxpayers who paid for this project get the jobs, the wages and the benefits from this project?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us be clear that it is illegal to use temporary foreign workers to do work that has not been offered to Canadians at the prevailing regional wage rate, jobs that of course receive the same protection and legal framework as jobs available to Canadian citizens. Therefore, I would appreciate receiving information from the member.

We are bringing forward a regulatory package to crack down with much more stringent sanctions on employers who abuse the temporary foreign worker program, to ensure that it is only and always a last resort and that Canadians always have first crack at available jobs.

* * *

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Mr. Larry Maguire (Brandon—Souris, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is an honour and a privilege to be able to represent the people of Brandon—Souris, who last fall once again voted for trusted leadership and strong economic management.

Since being elected I have been meeting with constituents, who all understand that one of the main industries driving our local economy is agriculture. Pork and cattle producers in southwestern Manitoba have been calling for a timely and responsive program to help protect them when commodity prices go down.

Could the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture please tell the House about the recent launch of the livestock price insurance program?

Mr. Pierre Lemieux (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Agriculture, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate the new member for Brandon—Souris for taking his place among us here today.

He is absolutely right. Canadians want a government that puts the economy first. The livestock price insurance program will help protect western livestock producers against unexpected price declines. The Canadian Cattlemen's Association has said the following: "This program gives more producers access to a solid tool to manage price and basis risk".

The constituents of Brandon—Souris can rest assured that under our Prime Minister we will continue to give farmers the tools they need to grow jobs and strengthen our economy.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in mid-January there was yet another incident involving toxic red dust in Limoilou.

The Quebec Port Authority has acknowledged that the dust came from the port, but the port and the company are hiding behind the federal government to avoid taking action. The federal government, in turn, is hiding behind the provincial government to avoid taking action.

The people of Limoilou deserve better than to be caught in the middle of jurisdictional bickering simply because no one wants to take responsibility.

Why are the Conservatives refusing to protect the health of the people of Limoilou?

[English]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, while the Quebec Port Authority is indeed an organization at arm's length from the federal government, it is my understanding with respect to this emission that the company involved, the tenant, is working with the provincial authorities regarding environmental issues and will continue to do so. Of course, we encourage the court of Quebec to do so as well.

* * *

[Translation]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mr. André Bellavance (Richmond—Arthabaska, BQ): Mr. Speaker, not only is the federal government trying to impose a job training program and a securities commission on Quebec—both of which have been rejected by the province—but now it is also trying to interfere in another area of exclusive provincial jurisdiction: education.

Ottawa wants to decide on the number of foreign students and their countries of origin, without taking into consideration Quebec's unique characteristics, such as its language and cultural ties with other countries.

The Government of Quebec's position is clear: Quebec, not Ottawa, will make the decisions about recruiting foreign students.

Will the Minister of International Trade respect Quebec's jurisdiction over education and give the province the right to opt out with full compensation, as it is calling for?

● (1510)

[English]

Hon. Ed Fast (Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, international education is a priority sector and a key component of Canada's new global markets action plan, which seeks to advance Canada's commercial interests in our priority markets.

International education is a key driver of economic growth in Canada, with over 265,000 students generating over \$8 billion a year in our economy. The international education strategy is a product of extensive consultations with the provinces, territories, and stake-

holders. We will continue to advance Canada's interests on the international stage by promoting our world-class education system.

* * *

LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES CANADA

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians have been outraged by the dismantling of government libraries, such as those dealing with fisheries, forests, and health. Under the Library and Archives of Canada Act, these materials are protected as the documentary heritage of Canadians. Surplus materials are to be placed in the care and control of the Librarian and Archivist, and materials and records cannot be destroyed without written consent. I have spoken to the current Librarian and Archivist of Canada, and it appears to me the act was not followed.

Will the Prime Minister commit to immediately investigating whether these acts of closing libraries and casting the materials to the winds, to dumpsters and to looters, are legal, and will he restore and protect the documentary heritage of Canadians?

Hon. Gary Goodyear (Minister of State (Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario), CPC): Mr. Speaker, nothing of the sort could be any further from the truth. Original materials will be preserved. Duplicate materials that nobody wants will be disposed of in the usual manner. Information that was available in the libraries continues to remain available in the digital world. Welcome to this century.

I will say that this allows more people to access that information and at less cost to the taxpayers. That is the truth.

* * *

[Translation]

STATUS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, on December 20, the Supreme Court struck down the provisions on procuring, solicitation and keeping a bawdy house under the existing legislative framework.

However, prostitution is a system of exploitation and a form of violence against women and girls.

Does the Minister of Justice plan to propose a new legislative framework to combat prostitution by making it officially illegal and criminalizing the purchase of sexual services rather than prostitutes?

Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, clearly, we are very concerned about the Supreme Court's recent decision, which struck down certain provisions of the Criminal Code.

We are in the process of exploring all possibilities in order to protect women and girls who are vulnerable because of this practice. Unlike the Liberal Party, whose proposal to completely legalize prostitution would put women in more danger, we will be examining the most prudent solutions in order to protect vulnerable women.

*Routine Proceedings***ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

●(1515)

*[English]***FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32(2) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, five treaties, entitled, one, Protocol Relating to the Madrid Agreement Concerning the International Registration of Marks, adopted at Madrid on June 27, 1989, as amended on October 3, 2006, and on November 12, 2007; two, the Singapore Treaty on the Law of Trademarks, adopted at Singapore on March 27, 2006; three, the Nice Agreement Concerning the International Classifications of Goods and Services for the Purposes of the Registration of Marks, adopted in Nice on June 15, 1957, as revised at Stockholm on July 14, 1967, and at Geneva on May 13, 1977, and amended on September 20, 1979; four, the Geneva Act of the Hague Agreement Concerning the International Registration of Industrial Designs adopted at Geneva on July 2, 1999; and, five, Patent Law Treaty, done at Geneva on June 1, 2000.

An explanatory memorandum is included with each treaty.

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*[Translation]***CANADIAN SECURITY INTELLIGENCE SERVICE**

Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 32 (2), I am pleased to table, in both official languages, the Canadian Security Intelligence Service's public report for 2011-13.

* * *

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

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8) I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government's response to 147 petitions.

* * *

PAN-CANADIAN STRATEGY ON CONCUSSION ACT

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-566, An Act respecting a Comprehensive Pan-Canadian Strategy on Concussion.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to present an act representing a comprehensive pan-Canadian strategy on concussion, inspired by three and a half years of work by extraordinary twin sisters in my riding, Sandhya and Swapna Mylabathula. These University of Toronto students, who have won numerous academic and leadership awards for their concussion work, met with top researchers and stakeholders across the country to determine the needs for concussion.

The bill aims to increase public awareness and education and improve current practices respecting the prevention, diagnosis, treatment, and management of concussion. It would establish a pan-

Canadian concussion awareness week and would require the Minister of Health to initiate discussions with provincial and territorial counterparts to develop a pan-Canadian strategy on concussion, including a centre of excellence in concussion research.

It is my hope that hon. members will support the bill.

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

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would simply like to designate Tuesday, January 28, 2014, as the first allotted day.

* * *

UKRAINE

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the parties and if you seek it, I believe you would find unanimous consent of the House for the following motion:

That this House:

Condemns the draconian law that was adopted in Ukraine on January 17, 2014 that severely limits the right of Ukrainians to peacefully organize, assemble or protest;

Recognizes that such a law undermines freedom and democracy in Ukraine;

Condemns the Ukrainian government's use of violence and threats of legal action against the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church for helping peaceful protesters;

Expresses condolences to the friends and families of those who lost their lives at the hands of the Ukrainian security forces on January 21, 2014;

Calls upon the Ukrainian government to bring those responsible for these acts of violence and repression to justice;

Continues to call for Ukrainian security forces and government to refrain from the use of violence and respect the people of Ukraine's right of peaceful protest;

Urges the Government of Canada, in collaboration with like-minded nations, to consider all options, including sanctions, to ensure that the democratic space in Ukraine is protected;

And that this House stands united with the Ukrainian people, who believe in freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

●(1520)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS**SEX SELECTION**

Mr. Harold Albrecht (Kitchener—Conestoga, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present two petitions from constituents of my riding and the surrounding area of Kitchener-Waterloo.

The petitioners ask members of Parliament to condemn discrimination against females that is occurring through sex-selective pregnancy termination.

SHARK FINNING

Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I take this opportunity to wish you and all members of the House a happy new year.

I have a petition from thousands of Canadians across the country calling on the government to ban the importation of shark fins to Canada. They say measures must be taken to stop the global practice of shark finning and to ensure the responsible conservation and management of sharks. They call on the Government of Canada to immediately legislate a ban on the importation of shark fins.

DEMENTIA

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition calling for a national dementia strategy. The petitioners want to draw the attention of the Minister of Health to the fact that the federal government needs a strategy on dementia because of the many Canadians afflicted by Alzheimer's disease or other dementia-related diseases.

The petitioners want discussions on the strategy to be initiated with provincial and territorial ministers within 30 days after the act comes into force. They want to see an annual report based on an assessment of Canada's progress and to see a round table established to receive advice from Canadians on this strategy.

PRIVACY

Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions today on the subject of a U.S. law, the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act, from my constituents and others throughout Ontario.

The petitioners are worried about the American legislation that conflicts with Canadian law, in particular the Bank Act and the privacy rights of Canadians.

Therefore, they ask the Canadian government to assure Canadian citizens and residents that their privacy rights will be respected and that Canadian sovereignty will also be respected as banks are pressured to comply with this American legislation.

[*Translation*]

CANADIAN MINING COMPANIES ABROAD

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to present a petition from young activists from Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

They work with Development and Peace and are concerned about certain actions and behaviours on the part of Canadian mining companies abroad, particularly concerning respect for human rights and democratic consultation with local communities. The petitioners are calling for the creation of a legislated ombudsman mechanism for Canada's extractive sector.

Today I present this petition on their behalf.

Routine Proceedings

[*English*]

PENSIONS

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I table a petition today from the residents of Winnipeg North, who want the Prime Minister to understand that people should be able to continue to have the option to retire at the age of 65 and that the government should not in any way diminish the importance and value of Canada's three major seniors programs, the OAS, GIS, and CPP.

DEMENTIA

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to present a petition from Torontonians for the Minister of Health and the House as a whole to support Bill C-356, An Act respecting a National Strategy for Dementia, which was introduced by the hon. member for Nickel Belt.

Diseases like Alzheimer's take a huge toll on individuals suffering from them and on their families and friends. I know this from the experience of my own aunt and from the experience of friends who just lost their mother, Sylvia Mackenzie, a woman of extraordinary strength and character. She is survived by a remarkable and loving family: David, Dan, Andrew, Lori, Kim, and Stephen. I am sure they would want to join these petitioners.

• (1525)

CREOSOTE

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

Forgive me for taking a moment to tell my fellow members of the House of Commons that the first petition was put together and signed entirely by grade 5 students of Salt Spring Elementary School. They have done their own research. They are terribly concerned about creosote coating on poles and the effect that it has on the herring population. They ask the House of Commons to discontinue the use of creosote in herring waters.

It is a very impressive petition, and I commend it to the House.

ROBERTS BANK TERMINAL

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition comes from more than a thousand residents of Delta, British Columbia, who are very concerned about the expansion of Terminal 2 at Roberts Bank in Delta.

The Roberts Bank ecosystem could be endangered by this expansion and by human-built extensions into the harbour. At this point, now that there is an environmental review, they are hoping that it will include proper and full public consultation.

Routine Proceedings

[Translation]

EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA

Ms. Laurin Liu (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to present a petition regarding the Experimental Lakes Area. This file has been unresolved for quite some time, and yet petitions continue to come in. The petitioners are calling on the government to recognize the importance of the Experimental Lakes Area in fulfilling its mandate to study, preserve and protect aquatic ecosystems.

[English]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present.

The first petition is from concerned Londoners. After a terrible tragedy in London, Ontario, the petitioners are asking that the Government of Canada and the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration look at what is happening in our immigration system.

First and foremost, putting their lives on hold for years to wait for a decision on their status puts stress on families and, second, the staffing in immigration and citizenship offices is continually being reduced, so people are waiting longer and longer.

The petitioners want the staff to be returned and they want immigration officials to consider all factors with respect to individual applications for status, including humanitarian and compassionate grounds.

VIA RAIL

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): As members will know, in southwestern Ontario, and indeed across Canada, we are suffering from a terrible loss of VIA Rail service.

The petitioners ask the Government of Canada to reverse the funding cuts that the government has initiated on VIA Rail, and like every other country in the developed world to invest in rail travel to ensure that Canadians have a 21st century transportation system, a system they absolutely deserve.

DEMENTIA

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present a petition on behalf of residents of the greater Toronto area.

The petitioners wish to draw the attention of the Minister of Health and the House of Commons to the fact that the federal government needs a national strategy for dementia and the care of persons afflicted with Alzheimer's Disease or other dementia-related diseases.

The petitioners call upon the Minister of Health and the House of Commons to pass Bill C-356, an act respecting a national strategy for dementia.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker,

the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 102, 109, 111, 112, 113, 118, 125, 126, 128, 135, 136, 138, 145, 147, 154, 158, 160, 163, 164, 165, 166, 167, 168 and 169.

[Text]

Question No. 102—**Hon. Hedy Fry:**

With regard to the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-Being (NDPHS): (a) on what date did the government commit to participate in the Partnership; (b) what was Canada's committed annual financial contribution; (c) has Canada ever made a financial contribution to the NDPHS and, if so, how much; (d) what groups and organizations did the government consult in its decision to withdraw from the NDPHS; (e) has the government received any form of communication from other members of the NDPHS regarding Canada's withdrawal from the Partnership; and (f) was the Minister of Health ever advised on withdrawing from the NDPHS by her department and, if so, what was the department's recommendation?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the Northern Dimension Partnership in Public Health and Social Well-being, NDPHS, was established through the Oslo declaration on October 27, 2003. Canada participated in the adoption of the declaration.

With regard to (b), in September 2004, at the second NDPHS meeting of the committee of senior representatives a voluntary financing model for the NDPHS secretariat was agreed upon. Under this model, Canada was scheduled to contribute 8% of the secretariat budget. As countries—France, Denmark—withdrew from the NDPHS, Canada's contribution grew to almost 12%, or 38,517 euros in 2011.

With regard to (c), Canada contributed to NDPHS between 2004 and 2011, with the amounts varying depending on the secretariat's budget and the percentage requested from Canada. Over the course of eight years, Canada contributed 217,871 euros.

With regard to (d), Health Canada held interdepartmental consultations with the departments that had been engaged in the work of NDPHS. These included the Public Health Agency of Canada, Correctional Services Canada, and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade. Health Canada also consulted the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, ITK, the national Inuit organization in Canada, as well as the Assembly of First Nations.

With regard to (e), the response is no.

With regard to (f), yes, Health Canada's recommendation was to withdraw from the NDPHS, noting Canada's limited engagement in NDPHS activities and overlap in programming with other key multilateral organizations that Canada is actively engaged with, including the World Health Organization; the Pan American Health Organization, PAHO; and UNAIDS.

Question No. 109—**Hon. Wayne Easter:**

With regard to the news release dated May 8, 2013, in which the Minister of National Revenue announced "new measures" to fight overseas tax evasion including "An additional \$15 million in reallocated CRA (Canada Revenue Agency) funds that will be used to bring in new audit and compliance resources dedicated exclusively to international compliance issues and revenue collection identified as a result of measures outlined in Economic Action Plan 2013": (a) what, specifically, are these "new audit and compliance resources"; (b) what is each projected to cost; and (c) from where, within the CRA, will the \$15 million be "reallocated"?

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the additional \$15 million over five years in reallocated Canada Revenue Agency, CRA, funds will be used to bring in new audit and compliance resources to address international compliance issues and revenue collection identified as a result of measures outlined in economic action plan, EAP, 2013. The new audit and compliance resources will be used to hire additional audit staff to target the high-risk workload and to counter international tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance. The new audit and compliance resources in respect of the additional \$15 million in reallocated CRA funds, together with the \$15 million that was announced in EAP 2013 in support of the electronic funds transfer measure, will be implemented over time as the EAP 2013 measures come into force.

The new audit and compliance resources will complement the EAP measures to enable the CRA to more effectively address international tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance. Specifically, the new audit and compliance resources will be used to undertake the highest risk cases of international tax evasion and aggressive tax avoidance identified as a result of enhanced business intelligence tools, treaty exchanges, and other information sources; to pursue additional high risk international cases; and to fund other directly related program specific costs, such as appeals and revenue collection.

These resources will be phased in over the course of the five-year period commencing within the next year.

With regard to (b), as was mentioned in response to (a), as of the date of the question, new resources will be implemented over time as the EAP 2013 comes into force, phased in over a five-year period. As a result, the CRA is unable at this time to confirm the specific breakdown of the projected cost by audit and compliance resources beyond the \$15 million figure cited.

With regard to (c), the \$15 million will be reallocated from within existing CRA funding as approved by Parliament and Treasury Board. It is a common practice to monitor spending across all programs and activities and, where operational efficiencies can be realized, to reallocate savings to high priority activities accordingly.

Question No. 111—Hon. Ralph Goodale:

With regard to the Privy Council Office, and to the following documents: the Information to Obtain a Production Order and a Sealing Order, made on June 24th, 2013 by Corporal Greg Horton of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police in Ottawa, Ontario, before Chantal Dominique Marie Lurette, a Commissioner for the Taking of Oaths in the Province of Ontario, in which he states he has reasonable grounds to believe and does believe that offences contrary to an Act of Parliament have been made by Michael Duffy; the statements made in the Senate by Senator Michael Duffy on October 22, 2013, and statements made to the press on October 21, 2013 in Ottawa by Donald Bayne, a lawyer of that city acting on behalf of Senator Duffy: (a) does the Access to Information Directorate of the Privy Council Office still conclude that no records exist with regard to Access to Information requests A-2013-00231, A-2013-00232, A-2013-00233, A-2013-00075, A-2013-00076, A-2013-00077, A-2013-00080, A-2013-00085, A-2013-00099, A-2013-00101, A-2013-00103, A-2013-00104, A-2013-00105, A-2013-00106, A-2013-00113, A-2013-00114, A-2013-00116, A-2013-00120, A-2013-00125, A-2013-00126, A-2013-00131, A-2013-00132, A-2013-00139, and A-2012-00751; (b) will the Directorate re-examine the handling of those requests in light of the new information outlined above; (c) did the Privy Council Office formerly hold records which would have satisfied one or more of those requests; (d) if so, were the records transferred, removed, or destroyed; (e) if transferred or removed, to whose custody or control were they transferred or removed; (f) if destroyed, when were they destroyed, on what date or dates was the

destruction approved, and what is the file number of any order, instruction, directive, or authorization concerning their transfer, removal, or destruction?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Privy Council Office, PCO, offers non-partisan, objective policy advice and information to support the Prime Minister and cabinet. For more information on PCO's mandate please visit pco.gc.ca.

Subsection 4(1) of the Access to Information Act states:

“Subject to this Act, but notwithstanding any other Act of Parliament, every person who is (a) a Canadian citizen, or (b) a permanent resident within the meaning of subsection 2(1) of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, has a right to and shall, on request, be given access to any record under the control of a government institution.”

The decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in *Canada (Information Commissioner) v. Canada (Minister of National Defence)* clearly states that the Prime Minister's Office and ministerial offices are not part of the “government institution” for which they are responsible, thus exempting these offices from the provisions of the Access to Information Act.

PCO did not advise the Prime Minister on this matter. Therefore, it is not unexpected that records were not found within PCO with regard to access to information requests A-2013-00231, A-2013-00232, A-2013-00233, A-2013-00075, A-2013-00076, A-2013-00077, A-2013-00080, A-2013-00085, A-2013-00099, A-2013-00101, A-2013-00103, A-2013-00104, A-2013-00105, A-2013-00106, A-2013-00113, A-2013-00114, A-2013-00116, A-2013-00120, A-2013-00125, A-2013-00126, A-2013-00131, A-2013-00132, A-2013-00139, and A-2013-00751.

Question No. 112—Hon. Ralph Goodale:

With respect to Senate motions No. 2, No. 3 and No. 4 seeking to suspend Senators Brazeau, Duffy and Wallin without pay: (a) was the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) or the Privy Council Office (PCO) consulted or involved in the drafting of the motions, and, if so, who was involved; (b) what are the details of the emails, briefing notes, reports or other documents that were prepared by, or provided to, the PMO or the PCO for the purpose, in whole or in part, of drafting the motions, specifically the titles or files or reference numbers of those documents; (c) what meetings have the PMO or the PCO had, or been involved in, regarding, in whole or in part, the motions; (d) who attended the meetings in (c); (e) what are the details of the emails, briefing notes, reports or other documents that were prepared for or provided, in whole or in part, at these meetings, specifically the titles or files or reference numbers of those documents?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Privy Council Office was not consulted or involved in the drafting of Senate motions No. 2, No. 3 and No. 4.

Question No. 113—Hon. Ralph Goodale:

With regard to contracts that have been entered into by the government, which require the other contracting party to provide “industrial regional benefits” or other similar offsets across the country, since January 1, 2006: (a) how many have there been; (b) what were the specific commitments made in each case; (c) what is their individual and cumulative dollar value; (d) in which provinces were each of the said benefits/offsets to accrue; and (e) in each case, to what extent have the commitments been honoured?

Routine Proceedings

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to contracts that have been entered into by the government that require the other contracting party to provide industrial regional benefits or other similar offsets across the country, since January 1, 2006, Industry Canada reports the following.

In response to (a), the projects are listed on the Industrial Regional Benefits, IRB, website, www.ic.gc.ca/irb.

In response to (b), in 54 of the contracts, the contractor's IRB commitment is 100% of the contract value. In 2 contracts, the IRB commitment is 80% of the contract value.

In response to (c), the IRB obligation value for these contracts is available on the IRB website, www.ic.gc.ca/irb.

In response to (d), while there are IRB commitments and activities occurring in all provinces in Canada, provincial statistics are not tracked and reported.

In response to (e), contractors report to Industry Canada annually on their IRB activities. All contractors are on track to meet their IRB obligations by the end of their contract.

Question No. 118—Mr. Mathieu Ravnagat:

With regard to pensioners' contributions to the Public Service Health Care Plan (PSHCP) for retired public servants: (a) does the government intend to double or increase plan premiums; (b) is it accurate to say that PSHCP contribution rates (as a percentage for the pensioner and the government) are the result of an agreement between these two parties and, if so (i) when was this decision made, (ii) what is the rationale for this possible increase, (iii) how will the government go about implementing it; (c) what real savings will result from this premium increase; and (d) have studies been carried out in this regard, (ii) what were the findings?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, budget 2013 identified the Government of Canada's intention to continue to ensure that the public service is affordable, modern and high-performing. To help do this, the government also indicated that it would examine overall employee compensation and pensioner benefits. Discussions are under way on the public service health care plan in a forum that includes bargaining agents and the National Association of Federal Retirees to ensure that retiree health benefits remain financially sustainable and comparable with other private and public sector organizations. At this time, no specific decisions through this forum have been made.

Question No. 125—Mr. Justin Trudeau:

With regard to the Prime Minister's Office and the Privy Council Office: (a) how many records exist regarding the letter of understanding between the Prime Minister's former Chief of Staff, Nigel Wright, and Senator Mike Duffy regarding the payment of \$90,127 to cover Senator Duffy's living expenses; and (b) what are the details of each record?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Privy Council Office, PCO, offers non-partisan, objective policy advice and information to support the Prime Minister and cabinet. For more information on PCO's mandate please visit pco.gc.ca.

The PCO has no records of information regarding a letter of understanding between the Prime Minister's former chief of staff, Nigel Wright, and Senator Mike Duffy.

Question No. 126—Mr. Justin Trudeau:

With regard to the Prime Minister's Office and the Privy Council Office, what are the details of the letter of understanding between the Prime Minister's former Chief of Staff, Nigel Wright, and Senator Mike Duffy regarding the payment of \$90,127 to cover Senator Duffy's living expenses?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Privy Council Office, PCO, offers non-partisan, objective policy advice and information to support the Prime Minister and cabinet. For more information on PCO's mandate please visit pco.gc.ca.

The PCO has no records of information regarding a letter of understanding between the Prime Minister's former chief of staff, Nigel Wright, and Senator Mike Duffy.

Question No. 128—Mr. Ryan Cleary:

With regard to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans (DFO) and the province of Newfoundland and Labrador: (a) what programs does the Fish, Food and Allied Workers' (FFAW) union administer for DFO; (b) does the FFAW have any contracts with DFO; (c) does the FFAW administer the Dockside Monitoring Program for DFO; (d) does the FFAW receive any money for administering this contract; (e) does the FFAW administer the Stewardship Fisheries for DFO; and (f) does the FFAW receive money for administering this contract?

Hon. Gail Shea (Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the FFAW delivers the cod sentinel survey; the fisheries science collaborative program, FSCP; and post-season snow crab pot surveys, the aquaculture impact on lobsters and crab in Connaigre Bay and Eastport lobster marine protected area.

The FFAW applied for and received funding under the Atlantic lobster sustainability measures, ALSM, program and administers it on behalf of lobster harvesters in Newfoundland and Labrador.

With regard to (b), while these are not contracts, under the ALSM program, DFO and the FFAW signed contribution agreements. The remaining programs listed above are administered via contracts from DFO through PWGSC.

With regard to (c), the FFAW does not administer the dockside monitoring program for DFO.

With regard to (e), no, the FFAW does not administer any stewardship fisheries for DFO.

With regard to (d) and (f), it is not applicable.

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 135—Ms. Libby Davies:**

With regard to the Respect for Communities Act: (a) how many of the following were consulted in the development of the legislation, (i) health care providers, (ii) front-line service providers, (iii) medical research professionals specializing in addictions treatment, (iv) medical research professionals specializing in concurrent mental health and addictions treatment, (v) police departments, (vi) police officers; (b) of the organizations mentioned in the answer to (a), who from each organization was involved; (c) over what time period did the consultations take place; (d) which ministries were involved in the development of the legislation; and (e) from those ministries listed in the answer to (d), who from each ministry was consulted?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bill C-2, the respect for communities act, was developed further to the 2011 Supreme Court of Canada decision regarding InSite.

In this decision, the Supreme Court of Canada set out five factors that the Minister of Health must consider when assessing any future applications of this nature, including evidence, if any, of the impact of such a facility on crime rates; the local conditions indicating a need for such a supervised injection site; the regulatory structure in place to support the facility; the resources available to support its maintenance; and expressions of community support or opposition. Bill C-2 builds and expands upon these factors, setting out criteria that applicants would need to address when seeking an exemption from the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act for activities with illicit substances at a supervised consumption site.

The proposed legislation was designed to allow for a range of stakeholders to provide their opinion on an exemption application for a specific supervised consumption site. For example, letters of opinion would be required from provincial/territorial ministers responsible for health and public safety, local government, the lead public health official in the province, and the head of the local police force.

Individual Canadians would be engaged directly through the proposed authority to allow the Minister of Health to publicly post a notice of application regarding proposed supervised consumption sites. Once posted, members of the public would have 90 days to provide comments to the minister.

Applicants would also have to provide a report of consultations with professional licensing authorities for physicians and nurses. The applicant would also have to consult community stakeholders and provide to the minister, among other things, a description of how any relevant stakeholder concerns would be addressed.

By addressing the criteria set out in the proposed act, applicants would provide the Minister of Health with information needed to balance public health and public safety considerations in accordance with the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms when assessing such applications.

In the development of the proposed legislation, Health Canada consulted with Public Safety Canada, Justice Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and central agencies.

Question No. 136—Mr. Charlie Angus:

On what date and in what manner did the government receive a payment from Mike Duffy or his associates for expense claims?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Privy Council Office has no information regarding a payment from Senator Mike Duffy or his associates for expense claims. The Senate would have information about payments it has received.

Question No. 138—Mrs. Anne-Marie Day:

With regard to jobs in the public service between May 2011 and September 2013, broken down by department, located in the ridings of (i) Portneuf–Jacques-Cartier, (ii) Charlesbourg–Haute-Saint-Charles, (iii) Louis-Hébert, (iv) Louis-Saint-Laurent, (v) Québec, (vi) Beauport–Limoilou: (a) how many positions were cut; and (b) how many full-time and part-time employees were hired?

Mr. Rick Dykstra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the Public Service Commission does not collect data with respect to how many positions were cut in the federal government.

With regard to (b), the commission's information systems do not capture public service hiring information by federal riding.

Question No. 145—Mr. Sean Casey:

With regard to the Privy Council Office, and to the following documents: an e-mail, dated December 4, 2012, between Nigel Wright and Senator Duffy, tabled in the Senate on October 28, 2013 as Sessional Paper No. 2/41-112S; e-mail correspondence, dated February 11, 2013, between Senator Duffy and Nigel Wright, tabled in the Senate on October 28, 2013 as Sessional Paper No. 2/41-113S; an e-mail, dated May 15, 2013, between Senator Duffy and Chris Woodcock, referenced on the CBC News Network program "Power and Politics" on October 28, 2013, and published on the program's Web site; and the statements made in the Senate by Senator Michael Duffy on October 28, 2013: (a) does the Access to Information Directorate of the Privy Council Office still conclude that no records exist with regard to Access to Information requests A-2013-00231, A-2013-00232, A-2013-00233, A-2013-00075, A-2013-00076, A-2013-00077, A-2013-00080, A-2013-00085, A-2013-00099, A-2013-00101, A-2013-00103, A-2013-00104, A-2013-00105, A-2013-00106, A-2013-00113, A-2013-00114, A-2013-00116, A-2013-00120, A-2013-00125, A-2013-00126, A-2013-00131, A-2013-00132, A-2013-00139, and A-2012-00751; (b) will the Directorate re-examine the handling of those requests in light of the new information outlined above; (c) did the Privy Council Office formerly hold records which would have satisfied one or more of those requests; (d) if so, were the records transferred, removed, or destroyed; (e) if transferred or removed, to whose custody or control were they transferred or removed; (f) if destroyed, when were they destroyed, on what date or dates was the destruction approved, and what is the file number of any order, instruction, directive, or authorization concerning their transfer, removal, or destruction?

Mr. Paul Calandra (Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and for Intergovernmental Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Privy Council Office, PCO, offers non-partisan, objective policy advice and information to support the Prime Minister and Cabinet. For more information on PCO's mandate, members may visit pco.gc.ca.

Subsection 4(1) of the Access to Information Act states:

Subject to this Act, but notwithstanding any other Act of Parliament, every person who is (a) a Canadian citizen, or (b) a permanent resident within the meaning of subsection 2(1) of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, has a right to and shall, on request, be given access to any record under the control of a government institution.

Routine Proceedings

The decision of the Supreme Court of Canada in *Canada (Information Commissioner) v. Canada (Minister of National Defence)* clearly states that the Prime Minister's Office and ministerial offices are not part of the "government institution" for which they are responsible, thus exempting these offices from provisions of the Access to Information Act.

PCO did not advise the Prime Minister on this matter. Therefore, it is not unexpected that records were not found within PCO with regard to Access to Information requests A-2013-00231, A-2013-00232, A-2013-00233, A-2013-00075, A-2013-00076, A-2013-00077, A-2013-00080, A-2013-00085, A-2013-00099, A-2013-00101, A-2013-00103, A-2013-00104, A-2013-00105, A-2013-00106, A-2013-00113, A-2013-00114, A-2013-00116, A-2013-00120, A-2013-00125, A-2013-00126, A-2013-00131, A-2013-00132, A-2013-00139, and A-2013-00751.

Question No. 147—Mr. Guy Caron:

With regard to the report by Caroline Desbiens, the lawyer mandated in June 2012 by the Minister of Transport to investigate the notices of objection to the proposal to repeal the Laurentian Pilotage Authority District No. 3 Regulations: (a) when is the report scheduled to be released; (b) which groups and individuals did Ms. Desbiens consult as part of her investigation; and (c) how many submissions or written notices have been sent to Ms. Desbiens?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), Transport Canada is presently studying the report. The release date has not been established.

With regard to (b), in the framework of the investigation, representatives from Transport Canada, the Canadian Marine Pilots' Association, the Laurentian Pilotage Authority, the Agence Océanique du Bas-Saint-Laurent, the Agence Marine Montreal Inc., and other individuals were met with or reached by telephone.

With regard to (c), Transport Canada did not submit any memorandum or written comments to Ms. Desbiens during the investigation.

Question No. 154—Ms. Libby Davies:

With regard to the letters that Health Canada mailed to over 40 000 participants in the current medical marijuana access program (MMAP), which disclosed their personal address information on an envelope marked as being from the MMAP: (a) what are the standard protocols governing the communication of changes to medical programs from Health Canada, and what laws or regulations govern these protocols; (b) which branch and department is responsible for mailing out correspondence about the MMAP; (c) how many full-time employees and managers were involved in communicating the MMAP changes in this mail-out; (d) what protocols are followed once a breach of privacy has occurred; (e) what were all of the steps taken when this MMAP privacy breach occurred in November 2013; (f) were the changes that were made to the MMAP subject to a privacy impact assessment; and (g) was that assessment reviewed with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), Health Canada is governed by the same communications protocols as other government departments, including the communications policy of the Government of Canada and any directives and guidelines set forth by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, TBS.

With regard to (b), typically correspondence with respect to the program is mailed out by the Bureau of Medical Cannabis, which is part of the Healthy Environments and Consumer Safety Branch, or HECSB, of Health Canada. In the case of this mail-out, considering the volume of letters to be sent and the number of pages per

envelope, Health Canada entered into a memorandum of agreement with Canada Post to conduct this mailing.

With regard to (c), it is not possible to accurately quantify the number of people involved in the mail-out.

With regard to (d), Health Canada has a comprehensive process that is followed in cases where a privacy breach may have occurred. When a possible breach is reported to the Access to Information and Privacy Division, ATIP, privacy and program officials work together to gather facts and assess next steps. In keeping with the TBS guidelines on privacy breaches and Health Canada's own process, when the department assesses that a breach may have occurred, the principles of containment, notification, and mitigation are followed. Through this process a review of the incident and all associated events occurs.

With regard to (e), although it has not been determined by the courts or by the Office of the Privacy Commissioner, the OPC, that this incident constitutes a privacy breach, Health Canada has taken the expressed privacy concerns very seriously. The department is taking steps to ensure this does not happen again. Given ongoing litigation and OPC investigation, Health Canada is not in a position to comment further.

With regard to (f), Health Canada met with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner during the development of the Marijuana for Medical Purposes Regulations, MMAPR, to review the new framework. In addition, as part of the implementation of the new regime, a PIA process is in progress for the MMAPR. Under the MMAPR, Health Canada will no longer collect personal information on program participants, who now number over 37,000 Canadians, as it did under the old program. Instead, it will be in receipt of information from those applying to become licensed producers. The PIA is focused on ensuring adequate protection mechanisms for this type of data.

With regard to (g), once the PIA process is complete as required by Treasury Board policy, the PIA will be submitted to the Office of the Privacy Commissioner and the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat.

Question No. 158—Ms. Irene Mathysen:

With regard to occupation of the former Embassy of the United States of America, located directly across from Parliament Hill at 100 Wellington Street, and its annex at 128 Wellington Street, which are listed on the Treasury Board of Canada website as "fully occupied": (a) by whom are the buildings occupied; (b) since when have they occupied the building and annex; (c) how long is the lease for the building and annex; and (d) for what purposes are they occupying the building and annex?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the 100 Wellington Street and the 128 Wellington Street buildings owned by the Department of Public Works and Government Services Canada are vacant.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to (b), the buildings have been vacant since the late 1990s.

With regard to (c), no lease exists.

With regard to (d), no tenants occupy the buildings.

Members should note that PWGSC is working with the Treasury Board Secretariat to correct the outdated information in the Directory of Federal Real Property.

Question No. 160—Ms. Chris Charlton:

With regard to the City of Hamilton's legal action against the government over the environmental assessment of the Red Hill Creek Expressway: (a) what is the amount of money spent by the government on this action to date; (b) what is the current status of the legal action; and (c) which documents filed with the court from either party can be accessed by the public and made available?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), to the extent that the information that has been requested is protected by solicitor-client privilege, the federal crown asserts that privilege and, in this case, has waived that privilege only to the extent of revealing the total legal cost.

The total legal cost is approximately \$2,390,600.61.

With regard to (b), this action is currently at the oral discovery stage. The plaintiffs have completed examinations for discovery of 11 defendants.

With regard to (c), all documents filed with the court are accessible by the public.

Question No. 163—Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault:

With regard to the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority Act (CATSA): (a) how many aerodromes have submitted a request to be added to the schedule of the CATSA Aerodrome Designation Regulations since 2002, broken down by year; (b) which aerodromes have submitted a request to be added to the schedule of the CATSA Aerodrome Designation Regulations since 2002, broken down by year; (c) what criteria must be met for an aerodrome to be added to the schedule of the CATSA Aerodrome Designation Regulations; and (d) since 2002, have there been any changes to the criteria for assessing a request to be added to the schedule of the CATSA Aerodrome Designation Regulations and, if so, (i) what criteria have been added, (ii) what criteria have been removed?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), since 2002 there have been 12 requests for aerodromes to be added to the schedule of the CATSA Aerodrome Designation Regulations, most within the last two years. It should be noted that some of these requests were submitted by municipalities or others on behalf of an aerodrome.

With regard to (b), the aerodromes in question are as follows: Mont Tremblant, Québec, in 2004; Red Deer, Alberta, in 2004; Puvirnituq, Québec, in 2009-2013; Trois-Rivières, Québec, in 2009-2011; Schefferville, Québec, in 2012; St. Catharines, Niagara District, Ontario, in 2012-2013; Bromont, Québec, in 2013; Cold Lake, Alberta, in 2013; Dawson City Airport, Yukon, in 2013; Edson, Alberta, in 2013; Sherbrooke, Québec, in 2013; and Northern Rockies Regional Airport, Fort Nelson, B.C., in 2013.

With regard to (c), Transport Canada's security risk methodology is used to determine whether CATSA screening is required at a Canadian airport through the assessment of various criteria

including, but not limited to, passenger volumes and threat information. Together the criteria capture the overall risk environment at a particular airport. For security reasons, Transport Canada does not discuss the specific criteria used in the risk assessment.

With regard to (d), the security risk methodology was established in 2005. There have been no changes to the criteria since that time.

Question No. 164—Hon. Dominic LeBlanc:

With regard to the \$14 million referred to by Mr. Terrance McAuley, Assistant Commissioner, Compliance Programs Branch, Canada Revenue Agency, in the following comments made at the February 5, 2013, meeting of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance on the case of Canadians with secret bank accounts in Liechtenstein, "That project is virtually complete now... We have gone through the list and we have conducted 47 audits and identified \$22.4 million in outstanding tax from a base of approximately \$100 million in raw assets. From that, we are now in the process... we have finished collecting approximately \$8 million of that. With respect to the balance, roughly \$14 million is currently before the courts.": (a) how many cases does that represent; (b) how many of these assessments were appealed; (c) what are the dates when each appeal was filed; and (d) in what courts were these appeals filed?

Hon. Kerry-Lynne D. Findlay (Minister of National Revenue, CPC): Mr. Speaker, during a study of tax evasion and the use of tax havens at the February 5, 2013, meeting of the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance, the following question was put:

"I understand Project Jade was the ability of the CRA to go after those who came out of the Liechtenstein tax evasion situation in 2008. Apparently, 106 Canadians were involved. It was expected that millions of dollars in back taxes and penalties would result. Could you update us on what happened with respect to that?"

This question prompted the reply cited in written question Q-164.

Through its objection process, the CRA provides a fair and impartial administrative process for resolving disputes between taxpayers and the CRA. Filing a notice of objection is the first step in the process of resolving a dispute between a taxpayer and the CRA. If a taxpayer does not agree with the CRA's decision resulting from a notice of objection, a further appeal can be brought to the Tax Court of Canada, the TCC. The TCC is an independent court of law that regularly conducts hearings in major centres across Canada.

With regard to parts (a) and (b), members should please note that the stated amount of "roughly \$14 million" refers to matters being considered under dispute resolution processes, which include cases under the objection process as well as cases before the court.

With respect to Project Jade, as of December 4, 2013—i.e., the date of the question—eleven taxpayers have filed objections with the CRA, i.e., its administrative process. Of these, the CRA has reviewed and resolved the objections of ten taxpayers. The objections of one taxpayer are currently under review.

With respect to the appeal process, as of December 4, 2013—i.e., the date of the question—one taxpayer has filed an appeal with the court.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to (c), it is possible for taxpayers to each file more than one objection. For example, one could be filed for each tax year assessed. For the eleven taxpayers referred to in part (b), 19 objections in all were filed between May 2009 and March 2013.

With respect to appeals before the court, court records are a matter of public record and are available for consultation by the public. However, confidentiality provisions of the Income Tax Act limit the information the CRA can provide when the release of that information might lead, either directly or indirectly, to the identification of a taxpayer. With respect to the appeal in court mentioned in part (b), providing the exact date the appeal was filed could indirectly lead to the identification of the taxpayer involved with Project Jade; therefore, the CRA is unable to respond in the manner requested.

With regard to part (d), the objections referred to in parts (b) and (c) were filed with the CRA.

The appeal referred to in parts (b) and (c) was filed with the Tax Court of Canada, the TCC. The date the taxpayer's appeal will be heard will be determined by the TCC in due time.

Question No. 165—Mr. Scott Simms:

With regard to (41-2) Q-42, (41-1) Q-1057, and all other Order Paper questions in the 41st Parliament that the government has only partially answered or not answered at all, for the government as a whole and broken down by department: (a) in terms of staff time required to answer a question, does the government consider the following numbers of hours to be higher than the number beyond which it will refuse to answer a question: (i) 1-40 hours, (ii) 41-80 hours, (iii) 81-120 hours, (iv) 121-160 hours, (v) 161-200 hours, (vi) 201-300 hours, (vii) 301-500 hours, (viii) 501-1000 hours, (ix) 1001-2000 hours, (x) 2001-5000 hours, (xi) 5001-10000 hours, (xii) 10001-20000 hours, (xiii) more than 20000 hours; (b) in terms of cost expended to answer a question, does the government consider the following costs to be higher than the number beyond which it will refuse to answer a question: (i) \$1-\$100, (ii) \$101-\$500, (iii) \$501-\$1,000, (iv) \$1,001-\$1,500, (v) \$1,501-\$2,000, (vi) \$2,001-\$2,500, (vii) \$2,501-\$3,000, (viii) \$3,001-\$3,500, (ix) \$3,501-\$4,000, (x) \$4,001-\$5,000, (xi) \$5,001-\$7,500, (xii) \$7,501-\$10,000, (xiii) \$10,001-\$20,000, (xiv) \$20,001-\$50,000, (xv) \$50,001-\$100,000, (xvi) \$100,001-\$500,000, (xvii) \$500,001-\$1,000,000, and (xviii) more than \$1,000,000; (c) for each Order Paper question that the government has only partially answered or not answered at all, (i) what was the anticipated cost in staff time and money, (ii) by how much did this exceed the tolerance for answering the question in time and money; and (d) for each Order Paper question that the government has only partially answered or not answered at all, (i) how many days did it take for the government to conclude the question could not or could only partially be answered, (ii) how many days prior to the answer being tabled in the House was this conclusion reached?

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect to the preamble to the question as well as the preambles to parts (c) and (d), the government has responded to all questions placed on the order paper during the 41st Parliament with the exception of questions on the order paper when the House adjourned in December 2013, questions withdrawn by the member who asked the question, and questions on the order paper at the time of the prorogation of the first session.

If a member designates a question as a priority question, the government's time period to produce a response is limited to 45 days. Except as noted earlier, the government has provided a response on or before this 45-day deadline to every such priority question.

With respect to parts (a) and (b), the government has not refused to answer any questions on the order paper. A response has been

provided to each question, subject to the limited exceptions noted earlier.

Extensive manual searches, tabulations, and organization of information, which would divert a number of public servants away from their primary responsibilities, are sometimes required for preparing a comprehensive response to a question. If this is required, it may be determined that preparing a comprehensive response to a question, or some part of it, is not feasible. Such a determination is made in view of the resources then available, rather than applying an arbitrary threshold of time estimated for, or cost associated with, preparing a comprehensive response.

Ministers remain responsible for the content of responses that they sign or that their Ministers of State or parliamentary secretaries sign on their behalf.

With respect to parts (c) and (d), and despite the earlier response with respect to the preambles to those parts, from the opening of the 41st Parliament until December 10, 2013, Members of the House of Commons have posed some 1,662 written questions, including many questions which each contain dozens of parts or sub-questions. An extensive manual review of each response provided by the Government, together with the processes associated with preparing each response, would be required to provide a comprehensive response in the present case; such reviews are not feasible given the 45-day limit placed on responding to this question.

Question No. 166—Mr. Scott Simms:

With regard to the snowmobile protests that took place in Terra Nova National Park between January 2010 and December 2011 and all events and circumstances related to these protests, what are the details of all ministerial correspondence, letters, emails, internal recommendations, internal correspondence, internal action plans, briefing notes, or other written material pertaining to these events, including those relating to any related Access to Information requests?

Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC): Mr. Speaker, a breakdown of all ministerial correspondence, letters, emails, internal recommendations, internal correspondence, internal action plans, briefing notes, and other written material pertaining to the snowmobile protests that took place in Terra Nova National Park between January 2010 and December 2011 is as follows:

Briefing notes, 15; emails, 417; internal action plans, 20; internal recommendations, 3; ministerial correspondence, 22; letter, 1; and other written material, 23.

Question No. 167—Mr. Denis Blanchette:

With regard to the legal action taken by the 2005 government against Canadian National (CN) about respecting agreements for maintaining the Quebec Bridge, which has since split into two lawsuits: (a) what were the legal costs, broken down by year, for both lawsuits from 2005 to today; (b) what portion of the amount spent on legal fees for these lawsuits was spent on accommodation, travel and meals; (c) what firms are defending or have defended the government in these two lawsuits against CN; (d) what is the average hourly rate charged by the firms representing the government during the CN lawsuits; (e) what is the total number of hours billed to the government between 2005 and today, broken down by year; and (f) what are the projected annual budgets in the years ahead for the lawsuits against CN?

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a) and (b), to the extent that the information that has been requested is protected by solicitor-client privilege, the federal crown asserts that privilege and, in this case, has waived that privilege only to the extent of revealing the total legal cost.

The total legal cost is approximately \$381,792.94.

With regard to (c) through (e), a legal agent was not retained to represent the interests of Her Majesty the Queen.

With regard to (f), no formal budget has been established.

Question No. 168—**Ms. Yvonne Jones :**

With regard to National Defence, what are the details of the projects which will be funded by the \$107 million which has been allocated for planned investments in infrastructure at 5 Wing Goose Bay, as referred to in the government's response to Q-61 in the current session of Parliament?

Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on June 4, 2013, the former Associate Minister of National Defence spoke about \$407 million in investments at 5 Wing Goose Bay, which included approximately \$107 million that was spent or has been allocated for planned investments in infrastructure at 5 Wing Goose Bay. The details of the investments are as follows: central heating plant maintenance, aerodrome main ramp repairs, Hangar 8 repairs, building repairs to replace windows and roofs, infrastructure maintenance to various building and taxiways, conversion of the residential housing units' heating system from steam to electric heating, and minor projects such as providing a Canex refrigeration system and doors for Hangar 7.

Question No. 169—**Mr. Jean Rousseau:**

With regard to the Canadian Initiative for the Economic Diversification of Communities Reliant on Chrysotile: (a) how many private businesses have applied for repayable loans to date and what are these businesses; (b) what are the amounts of the repayable loans extended to private businesses to date, broken down by business; (c) how many business support organizations have applied for grants to date and what are these organizations; (d) what are the amounts granted to business support organizations to date, broken down by business support organization; (e) how many non-profit organizations have applied for grants to date and what are these organizations; (f) what are the amounts granted to non-profit organizations to date, broken down by organization; (g) how many municipalities and RCMs have applied for grants to date and what are these municipalities and RCMs; and (h) what are the amounts granted to municipalities and RCMs to date, broken down by municipality and RCM?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian initiative for the economic diversification of communities reliant on chrysotile was launched on June 13, 2013.

In effect until March 31, 2020, with a budget of \$50 million over the next seven years, the Canadian initiative for the economic diversification of communities reliant on chrysotile aims to help communities and businesses in the Des Sources and Des Appalaches regional county municipalities, or RCMs, make the transition to new economic activities, particularly in the secondary and tertiary sectors.

Managed by the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec through its Quebec economic development program, this initiative builds on the priorities stated in the

Government of Canada's budget 2013, including investing in communities.

With regard to parts (a) and (b), between June 13, 2013, and December 5, 2013, the agency received seven applications for contributions from private businesses as part of the Canadian initiative for the economic diversification of communities reliant on chrysotile. As of December 5, 2013, the agency has granted three contributions for a total amount of \$338,500. The names of the businesses that applied for loans could be considered third party information under the Access to Information Act. As no third party was consulted, the agency will not release that information. Since the agency adheres to the rules and principles governing government grants and contributions outlined in the Treasury Board policy on transfer payments, it will proactively disclose the names of the businesses that received a contribution and the amount awarded on its website at the following address: <http://www.dec-ced.gc.ca/eng/disclosure/grant-contribution-awards/index.html>.

With regard to parts (c) through (h), as of December 5, 2013, the agency did not receive any application for contributions from business support organizations, from non-profit organizations, or from municipalities and regional county municipalities as part of the Canadian initiative for the economic diversification of communities reliant on chrysotile.

* * *

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if Questions Nos. 100, 101, 103, 104, 105, 106, 107, 110, 115, 116, 117, 120, 121, 122, 123, 124, 127, 129, 130, 131, 132, 133, 134, 137, 139, 140, 141, 142, 143, 144, 146, 148, 149, 150, 152, 153, 155, 156, 157, 159, 161, 162 and 170 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 100—**Hon. Hedy Fry:**

With regard to funds, grants, loans and loan guarantees the government issued through its various departments and agencies in the areas with postal codes beginning in V6B, V6E, V6G, V6J, V5Y, V5Z, V6A, V7Y, V6H, V6Z, V6C, V7X and V5T for the period of January 24, 2006, to May 27, 2013, inclusive, what funds, grants, loans and loan guarantees has the government issued and, in each case, where applicable, (i) what was the program under which the payment was made, (ii) what were the names of the recipients, (iii) what was the monetary value of the payment made, (iv) what was the percentage of program funding covered by the payment received?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 101—Hon. Hedy Fry:**

With regard to Marchese Hospital Solutions' (MHS) communications with Health Canada (HC) from January 1, 2010, to May 15, 2013: (a) on what dates did HC receive any form of communication from MHS; (b) what was the subject-matter of each form of communication; (c) did HC respond to each form of communication received; and (d) did MHS request to be regulated by HC?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 103—Hon. Hedy Fry:

With regard to the Federal Framework on Suicide Prevention: (a) what actions has the government taken to implement this framework; (b) what groups and organizations have made submissions to Health Canada (HC) or the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC); (c) has HC or the PHAC invited any groups, individuals or organizations to make submissions; (d) what is the department's timeline to implement the framework; (e) will there be public consultations on the framework and, if so, when will they be held; and (f) what are the departments or agencies involved in the development of the framework?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 104—Hon. Wayne Easter:

With regard to imprisonment for life: (a) what offences in the Criminal Code allow for imprisonment for life; (b) how many individuals have been charged with an offence carrying with it a sentence of imprisonment for life, for each of the last ten years, broken down by province and offence; (c) for the individuals charged in (b), how many were convicted; (d) for the individuals in (c), how many received a sentence of life imprisonment; (e) how many individuals in Canada are serving a sentence of "imprisonment for life" and broken down by province and offence, (i) in what year were they sentenced, (ii) how many have been designated as dangerous offenders, (iii) of those designated in (ii), how many have received parole in the last 20 years, broken down by year, (iv) of those designated in (iii), how many have reoffended while on parole; (f) how many prisoners serving a sentence of imprisonment for life applied for parole and how many of them received parole, broken down by year, for the last 20 years; (g) what is the percentage of prisoners sentenced to life whose parole is approved, broken down by year, for the last 25 years, (i) of those sentenced to life, what type of parole was granted, (ii) of the breakdown in (i), how many committed an offence, (iii) what is the recidivism rate of those sentenced for life who are granted parole; (h) what is the percentage of prisoners not sentenced to life whose parole was approved, broken down by year, for the last 25 years, (i) of those not sentenced to life, what type of parole was granted, (ii) of the breakdown in (i), how many committed an offence, (iii) what is the recidivism rate of those not sentenced for life who are granted parole; (i) is there evidence to demonstrate that offenders sentenced to life and granted parole are more likely to reoffend while on parole than offenders not sentenced to life who are granted parole, (i) what evidence has the government sought in relation to this question, (ii) on what dates; (j) what studies has the government undertaken with respect to life imprisonment; (k) is there evidence to suggest that dangerous offender legislation is ineffective, (i) what evidence has the government sought in relation to this question, (ii) on what dates; (l) what studies has the government undertaken with respect to dangerous offenders; (m) what evidence has the government sought in relation to assessing the effectiveness of parole; (n) what studies has the government undertaken in relation to assessing the effectiveness of parole; (o) what studies have been undertaken with regard to what effect eliminating imprisonment for life would have on prison violence, (i) on what dates, (ii) with what result; (p) what studies have been undertaken with regard to what effect eliminating imprisonment for life would have on prison overcrowding, (i) on what dates, (ii) with what result; (q) what evidence has the government sought in determining that eliminating imprisonment for life would improve public safety; (r) what studies have been undertaken as to whether removing parole for those imprisoned for life would serve as a deterrent; (s) is there any evidence to suggest that removing parole for those imprisoned for life would serve as a deterrent to criminal activity; (t) has the government assessed the cost of removing parole for those imprisoned for life, if so, what (i) are the figures for each of the next ten years, broken down by province and year, (ii) is the information as to how these figures were assessed; and (u) has the government assessed whether removing the possibility of parole for those sentenced to life would result in any increased cost to the provinces, and if so, (i) to what extent, broken down by province and territory, (ii) for what purpose(s), (iii) were the provinces consulted in this regard, (iv) if so, when and by whom?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 105—Hon. Judy Sgro:

With regard to the use of Minister's Permits by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, how many Minister's Permits were issued each year from 2006 to 2013?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 106—Hon. Judy Sgro:

With regard to government grants, contributions and loans made between fiscal years 2007-2008 and 2011-2012 inclusive to organizations or businesses located in the postal Forward Sortation Areas M8X, M9A, M9B, M9C, M9P, and M9R, what are the details of such funding, including (i) funding program, (ii) date of funding or contribution agreement, (iii) total funding amount, (iv) recipient, (v) nature or purpose of the funding?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 107—Mr. Scott Simms:

With regard to government communications, what were the costs of transmitting each of the following press releases using Marketwire (or Marketwired) or Canada NewsWire: (a) "Harper Government continues to engage industry on the Canadian surface combatant project", issued by Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC) on March 8, 2013; (b) "Harper Government Invests in Canadian entrepreneurial business in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Quebec", issued by PWGSC on March 15, 2013; (c) "Harper Government kick-starts entrepreneurial and innovative business in Beaconsfield, Quebec", issued by PWGSC on March 18, 2013; (d) "Harper Government's ship strategy bolstering Canada's economy", issued by PWGSC on March 7, 2013; (e) "National Fighter Procurement Secretariat awards contract for next independent cost review", issued by PWGSC on March 11, 2013; (f) "Work progresses on Harper Government's evaluation of options to replace Canada's CF-18s", issued by PWGSC on March 3, 2013; (g) "Harper Government and Wounded Warriors Canada Continue to Work Together in Support of the Vancouver Homeless Veterans Project", issued by Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) on March 11, 2013; (h) "Harper Government Commends Queen's University for Offering Priority Hiring to Veterans", issued by VAC on February 27, 2013; (i) "Harper Government Marks the End of the Italian Campaign", issued by VAC on February 22, 2013; and (j) "Harper Government Announces Funding to Support Brain Research", issued by Health Canada on May 3, 2012?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 110—Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:

With regard to the consolidation of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' library system, for each of the following locations, (i) the St. Andrews Biological Station, St. Andrews, N.B., (ii) the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Centre, St. John's, Nfld., (iii) the Pacific Biological Station, Nanaimo, B.C., (iv) the Pacific Region Headquarters Library, Vancouver, B.C., (v) the Eric Marshall Aquatic Research Library, Winnipeg, Man., (vi) the Maurice Lamontagne Institute Library, Mont-Joli, Que., (vii) the Mère Juliette Library of the Gulf Fisheries Centre, Moncton, N.B.: (a) how many items from the library's collection have been retained for consolidation in another regional library; (b) how many items have been (i) deposited in other federal government collections, specifying which collections, (ii) offered to libraries outside the federal government, specifying which libraries and how many have been accepted, (iii) sold, (iv) discarded; (c) for each location, how many items have been digitized, distinguishing government of Canada publications, other government publications and items other than government publications; (d) for each location, what have been the costs associated with discarding surplus items; and (e) what are the file numbers of any contracts or invoices for the removal and disposition of discarded material?

(Return tabled)

Routine Proceedings

Question No. 115—Hon. Carolyn Bennett:

With regard to First Nations education: (a) how many First Nations elementary and secondary schools received Instructional Services funding or band-operated funding formulae by the department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development from 2006-2007 to 2012-2013; (b) what is the total amount of Instructional Services funding allocated nationally and by region for each year; (c) what is the methodology utilized to ensure that allocations under the formula respond to actual costs incurred by First Nations schools; (d) how many teachers and teacher aides in First Nations schools were funded, nationally and by region, by the Instructional Services formula; (e) what is the average salary, nationally and by regional breakdown, for teachers and teacher aides in First Nations schools for each year; (f) how are employee benefits for teachers and teacher aides calculated, (i) how much was allocated to employee benefits for teachers and teacher aides, nationally and regionally, from the Instructional Services formula from 2006-2007 to 2012-2013, (ii) how much was allocated to employee benefits for teachers and teacher aides from the Band Employee Benefits program, nationally and regionally, from 2006-2007 to 2012-2013, (iii) how does the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development ensure that benefit amounts available for First Nations to pay teachers and teacher aides are comparable to those benefits available for teachers in provincial schools; (g) how much of the Instructional Services budget is comprised of salaries for teachers and teacher aides; (h) what was the total nominal roll (number of funded students attending First Nations schools and provincial schools but “normally resident on reserve”) nationally and by region for each year from 2006-2007 to 2012-2013; (i) what is the total number of First Nations students ordinarily resident on reserve, age 6-18, who do not appear on the nominal roll; (j) what was the total national allocation to First Nations schools for the following targeted (proposal-based) programs from 2006-2007 to 2012-2013, (i) New Paths, (ii) Parental and Community Engagement, (iii) Teacher Recruitment and Retention, (iv) First Nations SchoolNet; (k) for each program listed in (j), how many recipients were funded; (l) for each program listed in (j), how many First Nations schools belong to the recipient organization; (m) how many recipients of the First Nations Student Success Program were funded and how much funding went directly to a First Nations school; (n) how many recipients of the Education Partnerships Program were funded and how much of the funding went directly into a First Nations school; (o) how many students recipient of the Special Education Program were funded, nationally and regionally, and how many eligible students for the Special Education Program were not funded; (p) how many program applicants of the Indian Studies Support Program were funded, nationally and regionally and how many programs were funded in colleges, universities, First Nations post-secondary institutions and First Nations organizations; (q) for each targeted program (proposal based) listed in (j), (m) and (n) above, how much was allocated internally for departmental use from 2006-2007 to 2012-2013; (r) what was the total amount billed by each province for the education of First Nations students “ordinarily resident on reserve” each year from 2006-2007 to 2012-2013; (s) what are all the required services provincial governments are obliged to provide First Nations students ordinarily resident on reserve in exchange for the government paying the bill for the services; (t) what conditions are put in place to ensure First Nations students ordinarily resident on reserve but attending provincial schools receive instruction in their languages and reflecting their cultures; (u) how does the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development assess programs and services provided by provincial schools for First Nations students ordinarily resident on reserve; (v) what are the federal accountability standards placed on provincial schools for programs and services provided to First Nations students ordinarily resident on reserve; (w) how many First Nations students accessed funding under the Post-Secondary Student Support Program (PSSSP) regionally and nationally for each year from 2006-2007 to 2012-2013; (x) what were the national transfers to First Nations for each year from 2006-2007 to 2012-2013; (y) how many eligible students were not able to access the PSSSP funds from 2006-2007 to 2012-2013; (z) how much was allocated internally to the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development; (aa) what was the national and regional allocation for the University College Entrance Program for each year from 2006-2007 to 2012-2013; (bb) how many students were funded for each year from 2006-2007 to 2012-2013, nationally and regionally; and (cc) what is the total value of the contract numbered #9200-07-0040/04 done by KPMG for the Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development to study education funding on reserve, (i) how were First Nations consulted in the preparation of KPMG’s resulting report, (ii) how is KPMG’s report being utilized by the Department to improve education funding for First Nations schools, (iii) when will the KPMG report be shared with First Nations, (iv) when will the KPMG report be shared with Parliament, (v) what are the results of the KPMG report?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 116—Hon. Carolyn Bennett:

With regard to human trafficking in Canada and the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking: (a) how many individuals were charged with human trafficking, specific offences under sections 279.01, 279.011, 279.02, and 279.03 of the Criminal Code from January 2005 to February 2012 and, in each case, what was the person charged with; (b) how many convictions were there of human trafficking specific offences under sections 279.1, 279.011, 279.02, and 279.03 of the Criminal Code from January 2005 to February 2012 and, in each case, (i) what was the person convicted of, (ii) what was the sentence, (iii) what other offences (if any) in the Criminal Code was the person charged with, (iv) what other offences, if any, in the Criminal Code was the person convicted of, (v) what was the sentence for each conviction for offences in the Criminal Code; (c) was there consultation done with stakeholders, non-governmental organizations or other interest groups in the development of the government’s National Action Plan to combat Human Trafficking and, if yes, (i) with which stakeholders, non-governmental organizations or other interest groups, (ii) did the stakeholders, non-governmental organization or other interest groups make recommendations to the government, (iii) what were these recommendations, broken down by each stakeholder, non-governmental organization or other interest group, (iv) which recommendations did the government incorporate into the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking, (v) which recommendations did the government not incorporate into the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and why were they not incorporated; (d) what metrics will the government use to evaluate the effectiveness of the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and who developed these metrics; (e) what are the metrics to evaluate the effectiveness of the Human Trafficking Taskforce led by Public Safety Canada and who developed these metrics; (f) are there reporting mechanisms in place to report on the effectiveness of the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking and, if yes, (i) what are these reporting mechanisms, (ii) when is the first report expected, (iii) how often will reports be made, (iv) will these reports be made available to the public and, if not, why not; and (g) are there reporting mechanisms in place to report on the effectiveness of the Human Trafficking Taskforce led by Public Safety Canada and, if yes, (i) what are these reporting mechanisms, (ii) when is the first report expected, (iii) how often will reports be made, (iv) will these reports be made available to the public and, if not, why not?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 117—Mr. Sean Casey:

With regard to government institutions within the meaning of the Access to Information Act, for each fiscal year from 2006-2007 to 2013-2014 inclusive, what was or is the budget and total employment, distinguishing full-time and part-time employees, for the Division, Directorate, Office, Secretariat, or other like organization within that institution who are responsible for processing Access to Information requests?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 120—Mr. David McGuinty:

With respect to the Canada Revenue Agency lawyers: (a) how many were employed for each of the years 2003, 2004, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013; and (b) how many were working as tax prosecutors for each of the years in (a)?

(Return tabled)

Routine Proceedings

Question No. 121—Mr. Ted Hsu:

With regard to the implementation of the Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA): (a) what steps has Canada undertaken to complete an Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA) with the United States; (b) with what type of legal instrument will the government enact a FATCA implementation agreement; (c) will the government bring an IGA before Parliament and, if so, in what form; (d) what steps are in place to ensure parliamentary review of an IGA; (e) what studies have been undertaken as to whether an IGA can be implemented as an interpretation of the existing double tax treaty; (f) in what ways will the government involve Parliament in any process to amend interpretation of the double taxation treaty; (g) who is involved in the process indicated in (a); (h) by what criteria is the government evaluating any proposed IGA with the US; (i) who established the criteria in (h), (i) on what date, (ii) under what authority; (j) is a draft IGA currently being negotiated, and if so, what is the status of said negotiations; (k) when will the draft IGA be made public; (l) will the public be consulted for input on any agreement, and if so, by what means; (m) with which specific individuals and groups did the Minister of National Revenue consult regarding FATCA, and on what dates; (n) with which specific individuals and groups did the Minister of National Revenue consult regarding any IGA, and on what dates; (o) with which specific individuals and groups did the Minister of Finance consult regarding FATCA, and on what dates; (p) with which specific individuals and groups did the Minister of Finance consult regarding any IGA, and on what dates; (q) what studies and analyses has the Department of Finance undertaken with respect to FATCA; (r) what studies and analyses has the Department of National Revenue undertaken with respect to FATCA; (s) what analyses and studies have been undertaken as to whether the proposed FATCA regime constitutes an override of the existing double tax convention; (t) what were the conclusions of the studies in (s); (u) what steps is the government taking to ensure that, as a result of FATCA or an IGA, the US will not be allowed to impose higher taxes on Canadian persons than those agreed under the current convention; (v) what studies and analyses have been undertaken to determine whether Canadian citizens and residents are or will be denied financial services in Canada owing to US tax law in general and FATCA in particular; (w) what are the conclusions or recommendations of the studies in (v); (x) what mechanisms are in place to ensure that Canadian citizens and residents are not and will not be denied financial services in Canada owing to US tax law in general and FATCA in particular; (y) what measures will be taken to remedy denial of services to Canadians as a result of FATCA; (z) what studies and analyses will be undertaken to assess FATCA's impact on the availability of TFSAs and RESPs for dual US-Canada citizens; (aa) what are the conclusions of any studies in (z); (bb) what analyses and studies have been undertaken regarding whether the US definition of "resident" for tax purposes, and its impact on Canadians with dual status, is compatible with Canadian law, including the Charter of Rights and freedoms; (cc) what analyses and studies have been undertaken regarding whether the US definition of "resident" for tax purposes, and its impact on Canadians with dual status, as will be enforced by FATCA or by an IGA, is compatible with Canadian law and, in particular, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms; (dd) what analyses and studies have been conducted with respect to FATCA's consequences upon Canadians who believed their US Citizenship had been relinquished; (ee) with respect to the studies referenced in (dd), what particular efforts has the government undertaken to ensure no violation of a Canadian's charter right would be occasioned by implementing FATCA or an IGA; (ff) what studies and analyses have been undertaken regarding the likely cost of FATCA implementation to (i) Canadian private institutions, (ii) Canadian individuals, (iii) the government; (gg) how were the figures in (ff) arrived at, by whom, when, and in consultation with whom; (hh) what studies and analyses have been undertaken as to whether the likely cost of FATCA implementation to Canadian private institutions, Canadian individuals, and the government will be offset by the receipt of reciprocal tax information and Canadian tax law enforcement by the US; (ii) what analyses and studies have been undertaken as to whether the likely costs and benefits described in (ff) and (hh) are likely to be greater, lesser, or the same as under the current tax-information-sharing relationship with the US; (jj) what agencies, boards, tribunals, or commissions of the government have studied, interpreted, analyzed, or commented upon FATCA, (i) to what extent, (ii) on what dates, (iii) with what conclusion(s); (kk) what specific steps has the government taken to assess the privacy implications of FACTA; (ll) on what dates and with respect to what topics has the government met with the Privacy Commissioner to discuss FATCA or the effect of any IGA; (mm) broken down by province or territory, (i) on which dates and (ii) with what individuals in the provincial and territorial governments did the government consult on the subject of FATCA; (nn) broken down by province or territory, (i) on which dates and (ii) with what individuals in the provincial and territorial governments did the government consult on the subject of any IGA; (oo) does the government have the support of every province and territory with respect to any proposed implementation of FATCA, and what evidence does the government have that this support exists; (pp) has the Department of Justice developed any policy relative to the implementation of an IGA and, if so, (i) how was

it developed, (ii) in consultation with whom, (iii) to whom was it provided, (iv) who requested it, (v) what were its findings, conclusions, and recommendations; (qq) how will the government monitor and enforce compliance by Canadian institutions with FATCA requirements; (rr) how will the government monitor and enforce regulatory oversight of the bank due-diligence efforts required by FATCA and its implementation, including (i) by whom (ii) how, (iii) using what standards such efforts will be evaluated; (ss) what penalties exist and what penalties does the government intend to establish for failure to adhere to standards indicated in (rr); (tt) has the Department of Justice or the Department of Revenue developed any legislation or guidance relative to the implementation of an IGA or FATCA and, if so (i) how was it developed, (ii) in consultation with whom, (iii) to whom was it provided, (iv) who requested it, (v) what were its findings, conclusions, and recommendations; (uu) has the Department of Justice reviewed any proposed legislation relative to the implementation of an IGA; (vv) with what individuals or groups has the Department of Justice consulted relative to the implementation of FATCA; (ww) what steps have been undertaken to assess regulatory changes to federal institutions at the provincial and territorial level that would be required as a result of FATCA or any IGA; (xx) what steps has the Canada Revenue Agency taken with regard to developing or implementing FATCA or any IGA; (yy) what tax information does the Canada Revenue Agency currently share with the US, (i) when, (ii) under what circumstances, (iii) in what form; (zz) has the government assessed whether FATCA and its implementation would require changes to the ways in which tax information is currently shared with the US; (aaa) what has the government sought, or does the government plan to seek from the US, in terms of reciprocal information sharing as a result of the FATCA or IGA negotiations, and what is the current status of negotiations on this point; (bbb) what measures are in place to ensure that no privacy laws or policies are violated in any transfer of information contemplated in (aaa); and (ccc) by what process(es) and on what dates will any IGA and its enacting legislation be vetted for compliance with the (i) Constitution Act, 1867, (ii) Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, (iii) Canadian Bill of Rights?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 122—Mr. Kennedy Stewart:

With regard to scientific research and the communications policies of Environment Canada, Natural Resources Canada, the National Research Council of Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, for each of these departments or agencies during the years (i) 2000, (ii) 2001, (iii) 2002, (iv) 2003, (v) 2004, (vi) 2005, (vii) 2006, (viii) 2007, (ix) 2008, (x) 2009, (xi) 2010, (xii) 2011, (xiii) 2012, and (xiv) 2013: (a) how many total media inquiries were received; (b) how many total media inquiries were completed; (c) how many media inquiries relating to scientific issues were received; (d) how many media inquiries relating to scientific issues were completed; (e) how many media inquiries relating to scientific issues were completed within 24 hours of the initial request; (f) how many media requests for an interview with scientists were received; (g) how many media requests for an interview with scientists were denied by or did not receive approval from communications, media relations, or ministerial staff; (h) how many media requests for an interview with scientists were instead responded to by communications, media relations, or ministerial staff; (i) how many media interviews were given directly by scientists; (j) prior to how many media interviews in (i) were scientists required, instructed, or asked to use prepared responses or approved lines; (k) prior to how many media interviews in (i) were scientists required, instructed, or asked by communications, media relations, or ministerial staff to omit scientific information; (l) how many media interviews in (i) were also attended, observed, or recorded by communications, media relations, or ministerial staff; and (m) how many media interviews in (i) were completed within the requested deadline of the inquiring journalists?

Routine Proceedings

(Return tabled)

Question No. 123—Mr. Kennedy Stewart:

With regard to the subsection of the 2013 Speech From The Throne entitled “Science and Technology”: (a) what accounting methodology was used to determine that, since 2006, the government “has invested more than 9 billion dollars to support science, technology and innovative companies”; (b) was the figure of “more than 9 billion dollars to support science, technology and innovative companies” adjusted for inflation since 2006; (c) was the figure of “more than 9 billion dollars to support science, technology and innovative companies” given in current dollars or constant 2006 dollars; (d) if the figure was given in current dollars, what is the value of the “more than 9 billion dollars to support science, technology and innovative companies” in current 2006 dollars; (e) how much of the “more than 9 billion dollars to support science, technology and innovative companies” was spent during fiscal year (i) 2005-2006, (ii) 2006-2007, (iii) 2007-2008, (iv) 2008-2009, (v) 2009-2010, (vi) 2010-2011, (vii) 2011-2012, (viii) 2012-2013, and (ix) 2013-2014; (f) how much of the “more than 9 billion dollars to support science, technology and innovative companies” was spent as part of the Stimulus Phase of Canada’s Economic Action Plan between January 2009 and March 2012; (g) what is the complete and detailed spending breakdown of the “more than 9 billion dollars to support science, technology and innovative companies” since 2006; (h) what portion of the “more than 9 billion dollars to support science, technology and innovative companies” since 2006 was invested in basic, fundamental, or pure scientific research; (i) what portion of the “more than 9 billion dollars to support science, technology and innovative companies” since 2006 was invested in applied research, industrial research and development, or commercial applications; (j) what methodology was used to determine that “Canada now leads G-7 countries in post-secondary research investment”; (k) where does Canada rank among the countries in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in regard to “post-secondary research investment”; (l) has Canada’s ranking among OECD countries for “post-secondary research investment” increased or decreased since 2006; (m) during the most recent fiscal year for which comprehensive data is available, what percentage of Canada’s total “post-secondary research investment” was made by (i) the federal government, (ii) provincial and territorial governments, (iii) municipal governments, (iv) the private sector, (v) charities, (vi) individuals and households, (vii) other sources; (n) what was the government’s total expenditure on “post-secondary research investment,” in current dollars, during fiscal year (i) 2000-2001, (ii) 2001-2002, (iii) 2002-2003, (iv) 2003-2004, (v) 2004-2005, (vi) 2005-2006, (vii) 2006-2007, (viii) 2007-2008, (ix) 2008-2009, (x) 2009-2010, (xi) 2010-2011, (xii) 2011-2012, (xiii) 2012-2013, (xiv) 2013-2014; (o) what was the government’s total expenditure on “post-secondary research investment,” in constant 2006 dollars, during fiscal year (i) 2000-2001, (ii) 2001-2002, (iii) 2002-2003, (iv) 2003-2004, (v) 2004-2005, (vi) 2005-2006, (vii) 2006-2007, (viii) 2007-2008, (ix) 2008-2009, (x) 2009-2010, (xi) 2010-2011, (xii) 2011-2012, (xiii) 2012-2013, (xiv) 2013-2014; (p) what measures or outcomes is the government using to evaluate whether or not the “[t]ransformation of the National Research Council” is effectively “helping to promote greater commercialization of research and development”; (q) what empirical evidence does the government have that the “[t]ransformation of the National Research Council” is effectively “helping to promote greater commercialization of research and development”; (r) what was in the annual budget of the Industrial Research Assistance Program (IRAP), in current dollars, during fiscal year (i) 2000-2001, (ii) 2001-2002, (iii) 2002-2003, (iv) 2003-2004, (v) 2004-2005, (vi) 2005-2006, (vii) 2006-2007, (viii) 2007-2008, (ix) 2008-2009, (x) 2009-2010, (xi) 2010-2011, (xii) 2011-2012, (xiii) 2012-2013, (xiv) 2013-2014; (s) what was in the annual budget of the IRAP, in constant 2006 dollars, during fiscal year (i) 2000-2001, (ii) 2001-2002, (iii) 2002-2003, (iv) 2003-2004, (v) 2004-2005, (vi) 2005-2006, (vii) 2006-2007, (viii) 2007-2008, (ix) 2008-2009, (x) 2009-2010, (xi) 2010-2011, (xii) 2011-2012, (xiii) 2012-2013, (xiv) 2013-2014; (t) what measures or outcomes is the government using to evaluate whether or not “doubling the Industrial Research Assistance Program” is effectively “helping to promote greater commercialization of research and development”; (u) what empirical evidence does the government have that “doubling the Industrial Research Assistance Program” is effectively “helping to promote greater commercialization of research and development”; (v) what measures or outcomes is the government using to evaluate whether or not “the new Venture Capital Action Plan” is effectively “helping to promote greater commercialization of research and development”; (w) what empirical evidence does the government have that the “the new Venture Capital Action Plan” is effectively “helping to promote greater commercialization of research and development”; (x) on what date does the government expect to “release an updated Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy”; (y) will the government be conducting open consultations with the Canadian scientific, research, and academic communities prior to releasing “an updated Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy”; (z) what commitments did the government make as part of its previous Science, Technology and Innovation

Strategy; (aa) which of these commitments in (z), if any, have not been met; (bb) what “targeted investments in science and innovation chains from laboratory to market in order to position Canada as a leader in the knowledge economy” has the government made since 2006; (cc) what measures or outcomes is the government using to evaluate whether or not its “targeted investments in science and innovation chains from laboratory to market” are effectively positioning Canada “as a leader in the knowledge economy”; (dd) what empirical evidence does the government have that its “targeted investments in science and innovation chains from laboratory to market” are effectively positioning Canada “as a leader in the knowledge economy”; (ee) what measures or investments has the government implemented since 2006 to “promote Canada as a world-class destination for international students”; (ff) how many international students have studied in Canada as a direct result of the measures or investments in (ee); and (gg) how many international students were studying at Canadian universities and colleges during calendar year (i) 2000, (ii) 2001, (iii) 2002, (iv) 2003, (v) 2004, (vi) 2005, (vii) 2006, (viii) 2007, (ix) 2008, (x) 2009, (xi) 2010, (xii) 2011, (xiii) 2012, (xiv) 2013?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 124—Hon. Judy Sgro:**

With regard to the Prime Minister's undertaking to establish new mandatory reporting standards for Canadian extractive companies: (a) what steps has the government taken since the 39th G8 Summit to develop a comprehensive bill that would require Canadian companies to disclose any payments made to foreign governments; (b) what steps did the government take prior to the 39th G8 Summit to develop a comprehensive bill that would require Canadian companies to disclose any payments made to foreign governments; (c) does the Prime Minister's commitment, as referred to in (a), apply exclusively to Canadian extractive corporations, (i) does it apply exclusively to Canadian corporations as regards extractive operations in foreign countries, (ii) what is the scope of said commitment; (d) has the government prepared or reviewed any draft bill that proposes to implement such reporting requirements as referred to in (a) and if so, to what extent has it consulted on this issue, (i) with whom, (ii) when; (e) has the government conducted or reviewed any studies regarding the effect of mandatory reporting requirements on increasing corporate accountability and combatting corruption; (f) has the government compiled or reviewed any other evidence regarding the effect of mandatory reporting requirements on increasing corporate accountability and combatting corruption; (g) has the Department of Justice been consulted with regard to the formulation of a comprehensive reporting regime that would apply to Canadian companies; (h) has the government consulted with the Department of Justice, or sought a legal opinion from any other source, as to the constitutionality of a mandatory disclosure regime as referred to in (a); (i) has the government expressed any position, either publically or internally, as to the constitutionality of such a mandatory disclosure regime as applied to Canadian companies; (j) has the government consulted with provincial and territorial First Ministers regarding the Prime Minister's commitment referred to in (a) and, if so, (i) who were the parties to any such consultations, (ii) what was the outcome of any such consultation; (k) has the government consulted with provincial securities regulators regarding the Prime Minister's commitment referred to in (a) and, if so, (i) who were the parties to any such consultations, (ii) what was the outcome of any such consultation; (l) has the government consulted with oil, gas, or mining executives regarding the Prime Minister's commitment referred to in (a) and, if so, (i) who were the parties to any such consultations, (ii) what was the outcome of any such consultation; (m) has the government consulted with representatives of First Nations regarding the Prime Minister's commitment referred to in (a) and, if so, (i) who were the parties to any such consultations, (ii) what was the outcome of any such consultation; (n) regarding the Prime Minister's commitment referred to in (a), does the government have any consultations currently planned with (i) the First Ministers of any provinces or territories, (ii) representatives of any First Nations, (iii) provincial securities regulators, (iv) Canadian corporate executives, (v) others; (o) has the issue of a mandatory reporting regime as referred to in (a) been raised in the context of the Canada-European Union (E.U.) trade negotiations and if so, (i) when and with whom was this issue raised, (ii) what was the outcome of these discussions; (p) does the government currently have a strategy in place to develop a mandatory reporting regime as referred to in (a) that is harmonized with such regimes as they exist in either the United States (U.S.) or the E.U. and (i) what are the details of this strategy, (ii) has the issue of a mandatory reporting regime as referred to in (a) been raised with American or E.U. officials at any time; (q) regarding the government's recently announced extractive transparency partnerships with both Peru and Tanzania, what specific steps have or are being undertaken to ensure (i) the increased transparency of payments by Canadian extractive companies to these governments, (ii) the increased efficiency and transparency of mining royalty management by local and regional governments, (iii) the improvement of living conditions for communities located near extractive operations in foreign countries; (r) has the government begun the process of creating an "action plan on corporate transparency," as per the Prime Minister's commitment at the 39th G8 Summit; (s) does the action plan referred to in (p) include any proposed steps to (i) ensure consistent and up-to-date information on corporate beneficial ownership, (ii) prevent corrupt practices with regard to bribes to foreign governments, (iii) prevent money laundering, (iv) prevent tax evasion; (t) has the government conducted or reviewed any studies, or compiled or reviewed evidence from any other source, regarding the effect of corporate beneficial ownership on corrupt practices by Canadian multinational corporations, including but not limited to the paying of bribes by extractive corporations to foreign governments and, if so, (i) what specific studies have been conducted or reviewed and what are their conclusions, (ii) what other evidence has been compiled or reviewed and what does it indicate in this regard; (u) has the government engaged in any consultations or reviewed any relevant evidence regarding possible consequences of the sale of Canadian corporation Uranium One, Inc. to JSC Atomredmetzolo to (ARMZ), a Russian corporation, with respect to (i) any foreign assets previously held by Uranium One, Inc., (ii) the human rights and environmental concerns of populations living near foreign extractive operations previously under the control of Uranium One, Inc., (iii) the possible sale of uranium previously or potentially extracted by Uranium One, Inc. to countries currently

within the scope of Canadian, U.S., E.U., or United Nations sanctions regimes; (v) has the government received any communications regarding the sale of Uranium One, Inc., (i) from government officials in the U.S., (ii) from government officials in any other country; and (w) has the government communicated any concerns to U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission, or to any other U.S. government official or agency, regarding the sale of Uranium One, Inc.?

(Return tabled)

Routine Proceedings

Question No. 127—Hon. Scott Brison:

With regard to the United States (U.S.) Foreign Account Tax Compliance Act (FATCA): (a) when was the government first made aware of this legislation and how; (b) what steps has Canada taken since the legislation's introduction in the U.S., broken down by year; (c) during the consideration of this legislation in the U.S., did Canada make any representations to the U.S. government and if so, (i) when, (ii) by whom, (iii) to whom, (iv) on what dates, (v) by what authority (vi) with what desired effect (vii) and with what outcome; (d) how many individuals in Canada will be affected; (e) how was the figure in (d) calculated; (f) how many Canadian citizens residing in Canada are U.S. persons under FATCA; (g) how many Canadian permanent residents are U.S. persons under FATCA; (h) how many applications for permanent residency is Canada currently processing from persons who are or will be treated as U.S. persons under FATCA; (i) broken down by province and territory and status, how many persons in Canada are projected to be affected by FATCA; (j) how was the figure in (i) calculated; (k) how many Canadian financial institutions will be impacted by FATCA; (l) how was the figure in (k) calculated; (m) how many non-financial Canadian entities will be impacted by FATCA; (n) how was the figure in (m) calculated; (o) what consultations has the government undertaken with respect to FATCA's impact on persons resident in Canada; (p) what consultations has the government undertaken with respect to FATCA's impact on financial institutions; (q) what consultations has the government undertaken with respect to FATCA's impact on non-financial entities; (r) what estimates and studies have been undertaken with respect to the consequences of a 30% withholding of U.S. sourced income to financial institutions; (s) when did the studies in (q) occur and what were their conclusions; (t) how much has been spent evaluating FATCA's impact on Canadians; (u) broken down by department, how was the figure in (s) determined; (v) what estimates have been undertaken with respect to FATCA's cost to implement for Canada and with what conclusions; (w) for the five years starting 2014, how much is FATCA implementation expected to cost (i) Canada Revenue Agency, (ii) the department of Finance, (iii) the department of Justice, (iv) other government departments, agencies, boards, or tribunals; (x) broken down by year and cost from 2010-2020, what is the total financial impact of FATCA implementation expected to be on Canadian taxpayers; (y) how were the figure in (x) obtained; (z) what outside legal opinions has the government sought with respect to FATCA's compatibility with Canadian law; (aa) when were the opinions in (z) sought and at what expense; (bb) have unsolicited legal opinions been sent to the government regarding FATCA; (cc) how many opinions in (bb) have the government received, (i) on what dates, (ii) with what conclusions, (iii) with what impact on the Government's actions; (dd) has the government assessed the possibility of not acceding to FATCA in any way and, if so, with what conclusion and with what cost to Canada or to Canadians when compared to accession; (ee) how much has been spent on negotiations surrounding FACTA, broken down by year and expense; (ff) which individuals from the government have negotiated on Canada's behalf regarding FATCA; (gg) what has the Minister of Finance's personal role been with respect to FATCA negotiations; (hh) what has the Minister of National Revenue's personal role been with respect to FATCA negotiations; (ii) what has the Minister of Foreign Affairs' personal role been with respect to FATCA negotiations; (jj) what plans or strategies has Canada developed regarding enforcement of any FACTA related agreement with the United States; (kk) what penalties will there be for U.S. failure to meet any of its negotiated obligations; (ll) has the litigation risk regarding any FATCA implementation agreement been evaluated and, if so, (i) how, (ii) when, (iii) by what means; (mm) broken down by department and agency, and with specific record numbers and titles, what briefing materials and files have been developed regarding FATCA; (nn) what measures are in place to assess the lawfulness and legality of any implementation of FATCA in Canada; (oo) have any future public consultations with respect to FATCA implementation been planned and, if not, why not; (pp) what is the projected impact of FATCA on the Bank of Canada; (qq) what efforts has the government made with respect to informing financial institutions of their obligations under FATCA; (rr) what efforts has the government made with respect to informing non-financial entities of their obligations under FATCA; (ss) what efforts has the government made with respect to informing individuals residing in Canada of their obligations under FATCA; (tt) has Canadian non-compliance with FATCA been assessed as a possibility and, if so, to what extent; (uu) has FATCA been raised in discussions between Canada and countries other than the U.S. and, if so, (i) with which countries, (ii) at what level(s) did the discussion occur (iii) on what dates (iv) in what forum (v) and with which individuals from Canada participating; (vv) have any studies or analysis taken place with respect to FATCA's impact on immigration to Canada by persons subject to this legislation and, if so, with what conclusion; (ww) has the Canadian Ambassador to the U.S. raised the issue of FATCA in any discussions and if so, (i) which discussions, (ii) on what dates, (iii) with what desired goal; (xx) has the American Ambassador to Canada raised the issue of FATCA in any discussions and if so, (i) which discussions, (ii) on what dates, (iii) with what outcome; (yy) has the government considered the correspondence of Peter Hogg regarding FATCA and

if so, (i) with what impact on policy development, (ii) with what conclusion; and (zz) what steps will the government take to minimize any infringement of Canadian Charter rights by any implementation of FATCA?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 129—Mr. Alex Atamanenko:

With regard to the horse slaughter industry in Canada: (a) what is the government's policy on requiring medical history on equine identity documents (EID) only for the last six months of a horse's life, and not for an entire lifespan; (b) does the government have information on what happened to the meat from the racehorse Backstreet Bully, who had been administered several courses of a variety of banned medications throughout its lifetime, prior to being sold into the slaughter pipeline, and what are the details of Backstreet Bully's EID and all other traceability documents and records; (c) does the government have information on what happened to the meat from the racehorse Silky Shark, who had been administered the drug phenylbutazone prior to being sold into the slaughter pipeline, and what are the details of Silky Shark's EID and all other traceability documents and records; (d) what system is in place for owners to report the history of banned drugs they have administered to a horse that they previously owned, when they discover that a subsequent owner has sold that horse into the slaughter pipeline; (e) when such instances as mentioned in (d) are reported, and it is found that the meat was sold as human food, what system is in place to recall that meat from domestic and international retailers, (i) how many such instances have been reported, (ii) what were the results of the government's investigations into these reports; (f) how does the government keep count of the number of horses being imported from the United States (U.S.) for slaughter; (g) how does the government explain the discrepancy between the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA)/Agriculture Canada and U.S. Department of Agriculture figures; (h) what were the findings of the government's investigation into the large numbers of emaciated horses arriving from the U.S. in 2011 destined for Les Viandes de la Petite-Nation slaughter plant, and what system has the government put in place to quell these importations; (i) what system has the government put in place to quell the loading and importation of near-term pregnant mares arriving into Canada from the U.S.; (j) what actions or procedures were taken by the government to address the potential biohazard noted in the June 2011 Verification Report by the plant inspector at Les Viandes de la Petite-Nation slaughter plant, namely, that not only was blood visible to the naked eye but that there were improperly cleaned saw blades upon the resumption of horse slaughter following the slaughter of cattle; (k) how many racehorses (thoroughbreds and standardbreds) were processed at Canadian abattoirs in each of the years between 2007 to 2013, and how many of these horses were pregnant; (l) what number or percentage of horses currently being slaughtered have been raised expressly for human consumption, broken down by (i) Canadian horses, (ii) U.S. horses; (m) what is the overall value to the Canadian economy in terms of job numbers and contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by (i) the horse slaughter industry, (ii) the equine industry; (n) is there any regulatory requirement for veterinarians, prior to administering medications to horses, to question owners about the likelihood of them being sold into the slaughter pipeline for human consumption; (o) has the government engaged in discussions with U.S. officials with a view to implementing an equine passport or other system to record the medical history of all U.S. horses beginning at birth and, if so, (i) what was the outcome of these discussions, (ii) on what dates did these discussions occur; (p) how many equine fatalities and injuries have occurred during the live shipment of horses from Canada to Japan while loading the animals onto aircraft or in flight, and what were the circumstances surrounding these fatalities and injuries, for the period January 1, 2008 to August 30, 2013; and (q) is it the government's policy to make publicly available the names of all meat-processing companies that are licensed to export horsemeat, as well as the countries they are licensed to export to?

(Return tabled)

Routine Proceedings

Question No. 130—Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:

With regard to rail safety in Canada: (a) for the period of 2006-2012, which railways were permitted to operate with a single operator; (b) for the period of 2006-2012, which railways had permission to leave trains unattended for limited periods of time on main lines with or without an idling locomotive(s); (c) for the period of 2006-2012, which railways had permission to leave trains unattended for limited periods of time on side lines with or without an idling locomotive(s); (d) with regard to the railways in (b) and (c), under what specific conditions could the trains be left unattended; (e) what legislative or regulatory framework governs local emergency preparedness plans in the event of a rail accident; (f) with respect to the plans in (e), (i) who is responsible for creating and executing such plans, (ii) by whom are they audited, (iii) how often are they audited, (iv) against what criteria are they audited; (g) by whom and how often are municipalities through which freight trains pass provided with regular reports on (i) the state of local emergency preparedness in the event of a rail accident, (ii) the state and maintenance record of the railway lines within their borders, (iii) the materials, hazardous or not, that are transported through their jurisdiction; (h) if reports referred to in (g) are not provided, why not; (i) how many of the DOT-111 railway tank cars and the DOD-112 tank cars are in use in Canada, for each year since 2006; (j) for each year since 2006, how many rolling stock and track safety inspectors were employed at Transport Canada, broken down by (i) province of work, (ii) oversight responsibility; (k) for each year since 2006, how many rolling stock and track safety inspectors employed by Transport Canada were responsible for inspections in (i) the Greater Montreal Area, (ii) the municipality of Pointe-Claire (iii) the municipality of Beaconsfield, (iv) the municipality of Baie d'Urfé, (v) the municipality of Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue; (l) how frequently are railway tracks inspected in (i) populated areas, (ii) unpopulated ones; (m) since 2006, when have the rail tracks between downtown Montreal and the City of Vaudreuil-Dorion been inspected; (n) does Transport Canada have a system of evaluation in place, based on the results of inspections by its inspectors, that ranks the operational state of different sections of railway tracks; (o) with regard to the system in (n), if it exists, does this system or database correlate with allowable train speeds on each section of track and with which company owns each section; (p) for each year since 2006, how many freight train derailments, minor and major, have taken place in Canada, broken down by province; (q) with respect to the derailments in (p), how many took place on (i) a horizontal track, (ii) a sloping track, (iii) curved track, (iv) straight track; (r) for each year since 2006, how many cases of runaway freight trains have been reported in Canada, broken down by province; (s) for each year since 2006, how many train accidents, derailments or other, involving hazardous materials have there been; (t) how are the contents of rail cargo verified by the government or its agencies to determine if the contents conform to the contents labels/markings on the individual rail cars; (u) what is the process by which environmental risks of the transport by rail of oil and gas or other hazardous material are assessed; (v) what quantity and type of goods that are shipped annually by Canadian National and Canadian Pacific on lines that run through Montreal's West Island in each of the last 5 years; (w) what are the allowable speeds for freight trains travelling different rail segments in the southwestern corridor of the island of Montreal from downtown Montreal to the city of Vaudreuil-Dorion; (x) with regard to the speed limits in (w), how is adherence to these limits monitored by Transport Canada; (y) with respect to the slowing of rail speed due to poor track conditions, how does Transport Canada verify that rail operators are implementing reduced speeds; (z) what is the slowest speed at which a rail operator will be allowed to operate its trains over a portion of track experiencing poor conditions before all traffic must be halted due to the poor track condition; and (aa) subsequent to the fatal accident in Lac-Mégantic, what plans are in place for reducing the speeds of freight trains passing through Canadian municipalities?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 131—Mr. Robert Chisholm:

With regard to the Social Security Tribunal (SST): (a) how many appeals have been sent to the General Division level; (b) how many appeals have been heard; (c) how many appeals have been allowed; (d) how many appeals were summary dismissals; (e) how many appeals were dismissed; (f) how many appeals are pending; (g) what is the average time for appeals to be heard; (h) how many appeals are dealt with per month; (i) what proportion of appeals are heard within the SST's timelines; (j) is there a backlog of cases; (k) how many cases are waiting to be heard; (l) where are cases coming from by rural/urban, or geographic region; (m) what are the common issues being (i) heard, (ii) allowed, (iii) dismissed; (n) how many appellants were granted access to consult their case file ahead of a hearing by the General Division, (i) by number, (ii) as a proportion of all appellants at this level; (m) how many appellants were granted access to consult their case file ahead of a hearing by the Appeal Division (i) by number, (ii) as a proportion of all appellants at this level;

(n) how are the cases being heard; (o) how many cases are heard via telephone; (p) how many questions and answers in person; (q) how many questions and answers via email; (r) has there been any feedback from SST members on the process; (s) what kind of training for SST members has been implemented; (t) given that SST members work from home, has any kind of networking system been put in place to support SST members; (u) given that decisions made by the Umpire and higher courts were provided in a jurisprudence library online, will the General Division or Appeals Division decisions be available in the jurisprudence library; and (v) will the more specific "Decisions Favourable to Workers" website be continued?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 132—Mr. Robert Chisholm:

With regard to Employment Insurance (EI) for fiscal years 2006-2007 through 2012-2013 (year-to-date): (a) what was the volume of EI applications, broken down by (i) year, (ii) region/province where claim originated, (iii) region/province where claim was processed, (iv) the number of claims accepted and the number of claims rejected, (v) for 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, by month; (b) what was the average EI applications processing time broken down by (i) year, (ii) region/province where the claim originated, (iii) region/province where the claim was processed, (iv) the number of claims accepted and the number of claims rejected, (v) for 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, by month; (c) how many applicants waited more than 28 days for a decision and, for these applications, what was the average wait time for a decision, broken down by (i) year, (ii) region/province where the claim originated, (iii) region/province where the claim was processed, (iv) the number of claims accepted and the number of claims rejected, (v) for 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, by month; (d) what was the volume of calls to EI call Centres, broken down by (i) year, (ii) region/province, (iii) for 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, by month; (e) what was the number of calls to EI call centres that received a high volume of messages, broken down by (i) year, (ii) region/province, (iii) for 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, by month; (f) what were the national service levEI standards for calls answered by an agent at EI call centres, broken down by year; (g) what were the actual service levEI standards achieved by EI call centres for calls answered by an agent at EI call centres, broken down by (i) year, (ii) region/province, (iii) for 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, by month; (h) what were the service standards for call backs by EI call centre agents broken, down by year; (i) what were the service standards achieved by EI call centre agents for call backs, broken down by (i) year, (ii) region/province, (iii) for 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, by month; (j) what was the average number of days for a call back by an EI call centre agent, broken down by (i) year, (ii) region/province, (iii) for 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, by month; (k) for EI processing centres, what was the number and percentage of term employees and the number and percentage of indeterminate employees, broken down by (i) year, (ii) region/province (iii) for 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, by month; (l) for EI call centres, what was the number and percentage of term employees and the number and percentage of indeterminate employees, broken down by (i) year, (ii) region/province, (iii) for 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, by month; (m) how many complaints did the Office of Client Satisfaction receive, broken down by (i) year, (ii) region/province where the complaint originated, (iii) for 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, by month; (n) how long on average did a complaint take to investigate and resolve, broken down by (i) year, (ii) for 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, by month; and (o) what were the major themes of the complaints received, broken down by year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 133—Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:

With regard to subsidies to rail operators for track repair and improvements: (a) what is the process for determining how funds are distributed; (b) for each year since 2006, what is the breakdown of the distribution of such funds, by rail operators; (c) were funds intended for the rail operator Montreal, Maine and Atlantic ever (i) withheld, (ii) reassigned to other operators; and (d) with regard to any funds mentioned in (c), for what reason were these withheld or reassigned?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 134—Ms. Libby Davies:**

With regard to the Federal Tobacco Control Strategy (FTCS) in fiscal year 2012-2013: (a) what was the budget for the FTCS; (b) how much of that budget was spent within the fiscal year; (c) how much of the FTCS was spent on (i) mass media, (ii) policy and regulatory development, (iii) research, (iv) surveillance, (v) enforcement, (vi) grants and contributions, (vii) programs for Aboriginal Canadians; and (d) were any other activities not listed in (c) funded by the FTCS and, if so, how much was spent on each of these activities?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 137—Mr. François Lapointe:

With regard to the Port of Gros Cacouna (QC) breakwater repair: (a) what is the government funding provided, by department or agency, initiative and amount concerning the Port of Gros Cacouna breakwater repair; (b) was there a public tender; (c) what is the project start date; (d) what is the expected project completion date; (e) what is the total project value; (f) what are the specifications for the production of the stone required for the project; (g) who are the bidders for the production of stone; (h) what is the outcome of the tender for the production of stone; (i) what is the complete list of names of all individuals who were at the time of the tender directors of the winning bidder; (j) what is the complete list of names of all individuals who are currently directors of the winning bidder; (k) what are the technical explanations for the decision regarding the lack of stone density in the Cacouna region; (l) further to these investments, will the project to transfer the Port of Gros Cacouna be abandoned; and (m) will Transport Canada give a public presentation on the short-term planning regarding the Gros Cacouna port facilities?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 139—Ms. Lise St-Denis:

With regard to Canadian Forces (CF) pensions: (a) for each of the last five years, how many people have been eligible to begin receiving a pension; (b) how many people have retired from the CF in the past year and have become eligible for a pension; (c) for the next five years, how many retirees are projected to become eligible for a pension; (d) what is the average amount of a monthly pension cheque; (e) how much money was spent on pensions for each of the last five years; (f) how much money is allotted for pensions for each of the next five years; (g) what is the process by which one applies for a pension; (h) between the last CF pay cheque and the first pension payment, how much time elapses, (i) what is the service standard for the department with regard to time lapses between the last pay cheque and the first payment, (ii) how is the service standard determined; (j) what are the current delays between the last pay cheque and first pension payment processed, broken down by province or territory; (k) how many retirees have had to wait longer than 12 weeks for their first payment to be processed; (l) how many applications currently remain to be processed, broken down by province or territory; (m) how many applications currently remain to be processed, broken down by facility; (n) what steps are in place to mitigate any delay in processing pensions; (o) what additional procedures will be enacted to mitigate delays in processing pensions; (p) what studies have been undertaken with respect to the effects of delayed pension payment on former CF members; (q) what studies and analyses have been undertaken with respect to ensuring immediate processing and service of the pension payment; (r) with regard to the previously-mentioned studies and analyses, have any budget forecasts been prepared, and if so, (i) on what date, (ii) by whom, (iii) using what standard; (s) who is responsible for the administration of payment of pensions, (i) in what ways is the process reviewed, (ii) at what intervals is the process reviewed, (iii) by what standards is the process reviewed; (t) what is the average processing time per pension claim, broken down by province and territory; (u) what is the defined range of acceptable processing times, broken down by province and territory, (i) how is this timeline determined, (ii) by whom is this timeline determined, (iii) with what metrics is this timeline determined; (v) where is the payment of pensions processed and (i) by whom, (ii) with what qualifications for employment, (iii) how many are employed in said capacity, broken down by facility in the years 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2013; (w) what consultations have taken place with the Veterans Ombudsman regarding timeliness of payment delivery; (x) what consultations have taken place with veterans groups regarding the timeliness of payment processing and delays; (y) what consultations are scheduled with veterans groups regarding the timeliness of payment processing; (z) with what individuals has the Minister of Veterans Affairs met regarding the issue of payment and processing for veterans pensions; (aa) with what individuals have officials from the Department of Veterans Affairs met regarding the issue of payment and processing for veterans pensions; (bb) what other government departments or agencies are involved with the

processing of pensions and benefits and to what extent; (cc) broken down by month, how long on average have individuals waited in the last five years to receive their first pension cheque; (dd) what measures are in place to communicate delays in payment and processing of pensions to applicants; (ee) what specific statistics are tracked by the department with regard to applications for, processing of, and payment of pensions?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 140—Mr. Randall Garrison:

With regard to the Canadian Firearms Advisory Committee established under the authority of the Department of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Act: (a) what is the current list of committee members; (b) on what date were each of these members appointed or reappointed; (c) what is the term of appointment for each member, including dates; (d) what is the position on the committee of each member; (e) how many times has the committee met since its creation, (i) on which dates, (ii) in which locations; (f) what were the topics discussed at each meeting; (g) which meetings has the minister participated in, by phone or in person; (h) how many departmental staff are assigned to support the committee; (i) what is the budget provided for the committee; and (j) how much has the committee spent on travel and hospitality since its creation, broken down by year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 141—Mr. Charlie Angus:

With regard to ministerial offices using private legal counsel, for each year from 2003 to 2013: (a) what is the dollar figure spent on such counsel per year per ministerial office, including the Prime Minister's Office (PMO); (b) for the figures referred to in (a), what is the breakdown (i) by minister, (ii) by staff member, (iii) by investigation or case; (c) for the investigations or cases referred to in (b), who are the lawyers or firms hired per case; (d) what studies has the government conducted as to what the comparable cost would be per year per ministerial office, including the PMO, if legal counsel were kept in-house, and what are the results of those studies; (e) has legal counsel been retained in the matter of the involvement of ministerial offices (including the PMO) in Senate affairs, and, if so, what is the cost of that counsel broken down (i) by ministerial office (including the PMO) per year, (ii) by minister and staff member, (iii) by investigation or case; and (f) of the investigations or cases referred to in (e)(iii), (i) who are the private lawyers or firms hired per case, (ii) how many lawyers have been retained per office and per case?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 142—Hon. Gerry Byrne:

With regard to the loss or theft of "weapons and accessories" in the Department of National Defence (DND) as reported in the Public Accounts of Canada, for each year between 2006 and 2013: (a) which weapons and accessories were lost by DND due to an offense or other illegal act, broken down by (i) weapon or accessory, (ii) individual cost to the government for each item lost; and (b) which weapons and accessories were lost by the DND due to accidental loss, destruction, or damage, broken down by (i) weapon or accessory, (ii) individual cost to the government for each item lost?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 143—Hon. Gerry Byrne:

With regard to the government's spending for fiscal years 2008-2009 to 2012-2013, what are the spending levels (i) by program activity, (ii) for each program activity, by standard object?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 144—Ms. Hélène Laverdière:**

With regard to the government's policy on fully autonomous weapons and autonomous robotics systems: (a) has the Department of National Defense (DND) provided financing, logistical assistance, or any other means of support for the research and development of fully autonomous weapons; (b) has DND provided financing, logistical assistance, or any other means of support for the research and development of autonomous robotic systems; (c) has DND awarded any contracts to develop or contribute to the development of autonomous robotic systems, and, if so, (i) what is the value of each contract, (ii) what entity was awarded each contract, (iii) what were the objective, terms, and conditions of each contract, (iv) what controls were put in place to prevent the future weaponization of this research; (d) has the government entered into any agreements with universities or research institutes in Canada to study or develop autonomous robotic systems, and, if so, for each respective agreement, (i) what is the value of the government's contribution, (ii) with which entity was the agreement signed, (iii) what were the objective, terms, and conditions of the agreement, (iv) what controls were put in place to prevent the future weaponization of this research; (e) do DND or the Canadian Forces (CF) have written policies, regulations, rules, or guidelines on the use of robotics by DND or CF, and, if so, what are those policies, regulations, rules, or guidelines; (f) do DND or CF have written policies, regulations, rules, or guidelines on the use of fully autonomous weapons by DND or CFs, and, if so, what are those policies, regulations, rules, or guidelines; and (g) what steps has the government taken in applying Article 36 of Additional Protocol I of the Geneva Conventions (new weapons), in regard to funding, research, developing and testing of new weapons systems?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 146—Mr. Romeo Saganash:

With regard to the total expenditure of the government, incurred by all departments, defending against Aboriginal rights claims made against the government, and appealing against case decisions upholding Aboriginal rights in court: for each fiscal year from 2002-2003 to the current fiscal year, (a) what was the actual amount spent on these activities; and (b) what was the amount budgeted to be spent on these activities?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 148—Ms. Megan Leslie:

With regard to fast-start climate change commitments made by the government in the 2009 Copenhagen Accord: (a) what analysis does or has the government used to analyze the results of funded projects; (b) when will the government announce its financial plans for fulfilling climate change mitigation and adaptation commitments to developing countries past the 2012-2013 fiscal year; (c) what are the conditions necessary for the government to renew its contribution of public funding in support of the 2020 goal, committed to under the Copenhagen Accord, to mobilize up to \$100 billion per year in financing by 2020; (d) what public funds will the government commit to fulfill its climate finance pledges between the fiscal year 2012-2013 and 2020-2021, broken down by year; (e) broken down by year, (i) what amount (in Canadian dollars) and what percentage of the funds referred to in (d) will be delivered as loans, (ii) what amount (in Canadian dollars) and what percentage of these funds will be delivered as grants; (f) has the government done any analysis of the social and economic impacts and benefits of loans versus grants for recipients; (g) what will be the percentage of funds allocated to mitigation, compared to funds allocated to adaptation to climate change, between the fiscal years 2012-2013 and 2020-2021; (h) how will future climate change mitigation and adaptation financing meet the requirements for Canadian official development assistance under the Official Development Assistance Accountability Act, namely with respect to poverty reduction, taking account of the perspectives of the poor, and the promotion of human rights; and (i) with respect to future climate finance funding delivered as loans or grants to multilateral banks, how will the government ensure that projects receiving funds meet the required aid effectiveness principles?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 149—Ms. Libby Davies:

With regard to Canada Summer Jobs: (a) for each year from 2010-2013, what have been the criteria used to evaluate applications for Canada Summer Jobs funding; (b) for each year from 2010-2013, what was the total amount of Canada Summer Jobs funding awarded to applications in Vancouver East, listed by organizations; and (c) what is the total amount of funding allocated for Vancouver East applications through the Canada Summer Jobs funding for the summer of 2014?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 150—Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:

With regard to Service Canada Old Age Security and Canada Pension Plan call centres for fiscal years 2006-2007 through 2012-2013 (year-to-date): (a) what was the volume of calls received by these centres, broken down (i) by year, (ii) by province or region, (iii) for the years 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, by month; (b) what was the number of calls that received a high volume message, broken down (i) by year, (ii) by province or region, (iii) for the years 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, by month; (c) what were the national service level standards for calls answered by an agent, broken down by year; (d) what were the actual service level standards achieved for calls answered by an agent, broken down (i) by year, (ii) by province or region, (iii) for the years 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, by month; (e) what were the national service level standards for call-backs, broken down by year; (f) what were the actual service level standards achieved for call-backs, broken down (i) by year, (ii) by province or region, (iii) for the years 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, by month; (g) what was the average number of days for a call-back by an agent, broken down (i) by year, (ii) by province or region, (iii) for the years 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, by month; and (h) what was the number and percentage of term employees and of indeterminate employees respectively, broken down (i) by year, (ii) by province or region, (iii) for the years 2011-2012 and 2012-2013, by month?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 152—Mr. Malcolm Allen:

With regard to the loss of honey bee colonies in Canada: (a) what are the results of the joint study led by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and the Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) under Health Canada; (b) what international partners is PMRA consulting in the re-evaluation of neonicotinoid pesticides; (c) how many currently registered products contain at least one of the three neonicotinoids under re-evaluation by PMRA; (d) what is the volume of neonicotinoids used every year in Canada, expressed in litres, and on which crops are they used; (e) what plans does Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada currently have in place should there be more incidents of mass honey bee losses; (f) how many mass honey bee loss incidents have been reported in (i) 2008, (ii) 2009, (iii) 2010, (iv) 2011, (v) 2012, (vi) 2013 thus far, broken down by province; (g) when is the final joint study by CFIA and PMRA going to be completed; (h) what stakeholders were consulted for the joint study; (i) do Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Health Canada have an official response to the European Commission's decision to place a moratorium on neonicotinoid pesticides; and (j) what written questions have been asked in Parliament on this issue?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 153—Mr. Malcolm Allen:

With regard to imported spent fowl products: (a) how many Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) agents are trained to identify the difference between spent fowl and other chicken products which are imported; (b) how many Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) staff are trained to identify the difference between spent fowl and other chicken products which are imported; (c) what tests do CFIA or CBSA staff carry out to distinguish between spent fowl and imported chicken meat; (d) how many kilograms of spent fowl were imported into Canada in (i) 2009, (ii) 2010, (iii) 2011, (iv) 2012; (e) how many kilograms of spent fowl were imported into Canada, from the United States in (i) 2009, (ii) 2010, (iii) 2011, (iv) 2012; (f) how many kilograms of spent fowl were imported into Ontario from the United States in (i) 2009, (ii) 2010, (iii) 2011, (iv) 2012; and (g) what plans does Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada currently have to change the labelling of spent fowl to distinguish it from other chicken products?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 155—Mr. Charlie Angus:**

With regard to ministerial offices outside of the National Capital Region: (a) what is the rationale for operating these offices; (b) what criteria are used to determine the location of the offices; (c) what branches or programs are operated out of the offices; (d) what is the name and purpose of each office, broken down by region and province; (e) what is the address and location of each office; (f) what are the annual costs of operating each office for each of the past five years; and (g) what is the number of (i) full-time staff, (ii) temporary staff, in each office?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 156—Mrs. Maria Mourani:

With regard to the files of people with cancer who were subject to removal orders, from 2006 to 2013, under the responsibility of Dr. Patrick Thériault, a doctor with Citizenship and Immigration Canada in Ottawa: (a) how many such cases have there been, broken down by year; (b) of the cases mentioned in (a), (i) how many stays of removal were granted, (ii) what were the time frames for these stays, broken down by year, (iii) what reasons were given to justify granting each stay; (c) of the cases mentioned in (a), (i) how many stays of removal were not granted, broken down by year, (ii) what reasons were given to justify not granting each stay; (d) what are the names of the cancer treatment services Dr. Thériault called upon, broken down by (i) year, (ii) date, (iii) method Dr. Thériault used to contact these services; (e) did Dr. Thériault exchange emails with cancer treatment services in Canada regarding the cases mentioned in (a) and, if so, what are the details; and (f) did Dr. Thériault exchange emails with medical services in the country of origin of the cases mentioned in (a) and, if so, what are the details?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 157—Mrs. Maria Mourani:

With regard to the files of people with cancer who were subject to removal orders from Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), from 2006 to 2013: (a) how many such cases have there been, broken down by year; (b) of the cases mentioned in (a), (i) how many stays of removal were granted, (ii) what were the time frames for these stays, broken down by year, (iii) what reasons were given to justify granting each stay; (c) of the cases mentioned in (a), (i) how many stays of removal were not granted, broken down by year, (ii) what reasons were given to justify not granting each stay; and (d) how many CIC physicians are assigned to this type of file, and what are their names?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 159—Mr. François Lapointe:

With regard to the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec and its network of regional offices past and present: (a) how many full-time employees and administrators have worked there in the past 10 years, broken down by year and regional office; (b) how many part-time employees and administrators have worked there in the past 10 years, broken down by year and regional office; (c) how many contract employees have worked there in the past 10 years, broken down by year and regional office; (d) how many days of sick leave have employees taken in the past 10 years, broken down by year and regional office; (e) how many full-time employees and administrators have taken retirement in the past 10 years, broken down by year and by regional office; (f) how many full-time employees and administrators have left for reasons other than retirement in the past 10 years, broken down by year and by regional office; (g) how many part-time employees have taken retirement in the past 10 years, broken down by year and by regional office; and (h) how many part-time employees have left for reasons other than retirement in the past 10 years, broken down by year and by regional office?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 161—Mr. Ted Hsu:

With regard to violent incidents related to overcrowding in federal prisons: (a) for each of the ten years from 2003-2004 to 2012-2013, and for each of the nine maximum security Correctional Services Canada (CSC) institutions, namely, Atlantic Institution, Donnacona Institution, Port-Cartier Institution, Quebec Regional Reception Centre and Special Handling Unit, Kingston Penitentiary, Millhaven Institution, Edmonton Institution, Saskatchewan Penitentiary maximum security unit, and Kent Institution, what were the numbers of inmates; (b) for each of the ten years from 2003-2004 to 2012-2013, and for each of the nine maximum security CSC institutions, namely, Atlantic Institution, Donnacona Institution, Port-Cartier

Institution, Quebec Regional Reception Centre and Special Handling Unit, Kingston Penitentiary, Millhaven Institution, Edmonton Institution, Saskatchewan Penitentiary maximum security unit, and Kent Institution, what were the rated capacities of each institution; (c) if each of the 90 data points in part (a) is denoted by n_{ij} where $i=1,10$ runs over the ten years and $j=1,9$ runs over the nine institutions in the order given, and if each of the 90 data points in part (b) is denoted by c_{ij} , where $i=1,10$ runs over the ten years and $j=1,9$ runs over the nine institutions in the order given, then what are the values of the fractional excess of inmates over the rated capacity of each of the nine institutions, for each of the ten years, namely, $f_{nij} = (n_{ij} - c_{ij})/c_{ij}$; (d) for each of the ten years from 2003-2004 to 2012-2013, and for each of the nine maximum security CSC institutions, namely, Atlantic Institution, Donnacona Institution, Port-Cartier Institution, Quebec Regional Reception Centre and Special Handling Unit, Kingston Penitentiary, Millhaven Institution, Edmonton Institution, Saskatchewan Penitentiary maximum security unit, and Kent Institution, what were the numbers of violent incidents; (e) if the 90 data points in part (d) are denoted v_{ij} , where $i=1,10$ runs over the ten years and $j=1,9$ runs over the nine institutions in the order given, what are the average numbers of violent incidents for each institution, averaged over the ten years, namely, $V_{avgj} = (\sum_{i=1,10} v_{ij})/10$; (f) what are the values of the fractional excesses of violent incidents for each of the nine institutions, over and above each institution's respective ten year average, for each of the ten years, namely, $fv_{ij} = (v_{ij} - V_{avgj})/V_{avgj}$; (g) what is the correlation between the fractional excesses of violent incidents and the fractional excesses of inmates over the rated capacity, for all combinations of years and institutions, for which the inmate population was more than 10% over the rated capacity, namely, the sample correlation coefficient between the set of all f_{nij} such that $f_{nij} > 0.1$, and the corresponding members of the set of all fv_{ij} such that $fv_{ij} > 0.1$; and (h) what is the graph of all the pairs (f_{nij}, fv_{ij}) which satisfy $f_{nij} > 0.1$, plotted with the linear regression line?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 162—Mr. Glenn Thibeault:

With regard to Industry Canada's "More Choices" campaign, relating to the government's upcoming auction of the 700MHz spectrum, what is the total spending by the government for online or web advertising through (i) Facebook, (ii) Twitter, (iii) Google, (iv) Yahoo, (v) Bing, (vi) Bell-Globe Media, (vii) Rogers Communications, (viii) PostMedia, (ix) Toronto Star, (x) Sun Media, (xi) Shaw Communications, (xii) Huffington Post Canada, (xiii) other websites, broken down by distinct URL?

(Return tabled)

*Speaker's Ruling***Question No. 170—Hon. Irwin Cotler:**

With regard to the victims' surcharge: (a) for each of the last ten years, broken down by province and year; how much was collected; (b) broken down by program and service, how was the money in (a) spent; (c) broken down by province and year, in what percent of cases was a surcharge imposed; (d) since the enactment of the Increasing Offenders' Accountability for Victims Act (IOAVA), how much, broken down by province and territory, has been collected; (e) for the ten years prior to the enactment of the IOAVA, how much money has the government given to victims' programs and services, broken down by program or service; (f) for the ten years prior to the enactment of the IOAVA, how much money has the government transferred to provinces for victims' programs and services, broken down by program or service; (g) for the ten years prior to the enactment of the IOAVA, broken down by year and province, in how many cases did a judge provide more than 20 years for surcharge repayment; (h) for the ten years prior to the enactment of the IOAVA, broken down by year and province, what were the mean, median, mode, and value of surcharges collected; (i) since the enactment of the IOAVA, broken down by year and province, what were the mean, median, and mode, and value of surcharges collected; (j) since the enactment of the IOAVA, how much money has the government given to victims' programs and services, broken down by program or service; (k) since the enactment of the IOAVA, in what specific cases, broken down by province, has a surcharge not been imposed; (l) since the enactment of the IOAVA, in what specific cases, broken down by province, has the collection of a surcharge been delayed more than 20 years; (m) prior to the enactment of the IOAVA, in which specific cases was the constitutionality of the surcharge challenged; (n) prior to the enactment of the IOAVA, in which specific cases did the Crown appeal on a matter solely related to the amount of the surcharge; (o) prior to the enactment of the IOAVA, in which specific cases did the Crown appeal on a matter solely related to the imposition of the surcharge; (p) since the enactment of the IOAVA, in which specific cases did the Crown appeal on a matter solely related to the amount of the surcharge; (q) since the enactment of the IOAVA, in which specific cases did the Crown appeal on a matter solely related to the imposition of the surcharge; (r) prior to the enactment of the IOAVA, in what circumstances did the Crown refer the matter of surcharge collection to a collection agency; (s) since the enactment of the IOAVA, in what circumstances has the Crown referred the matter of surcharge collection to a collection agency; (t) who was consulted with respect to the mandatory nature of the surcharge occasioned by the enactment of the IOAVA; (u) with respect to the IOAVA, were judges consulted, and if so, (i) to what extent, (ii) on what dates, (iii) by whom, (iv) with what outcome(s); (v) with respect to the IOAVA, were defense counsels consulted, and if so, (i) to what extent, (ii) on what dates, (iii) by whom, (iv) with what outcome (s); (w) with respect to the IOAVA, were Crown counsels consulted, and if so, (i) to what extent, (ii) on what dates, (iii) by whom, (iv) with what outcome(s); (x) did the government have any evidence to suggest judges would not delay the collection of surcharges upon enactment of the IOAVA; (y) did the government have any evidence to suggest judges would not reduce fines imposed upon enactment of the IOAVA; (z) since the IOAVA came into force, how many cases is the government currently appealing or did it appeal, broken down by province and with style of cause provided, in matters related to fine or surcharge imposition or collection; (aa) of the cases in (z), what offence was committed; (bb) of the cases in (z), what amount of fine was imposed; (cc) of the cases in (z), what amount of surcharge is to be imposed; (dd) of the cases in (z), what timeline for surcharge repayment was provided; (ee) of the cases in (z), how much is expected to be spent on the government's appeal; (ff) of the cases in (z), what specific victims can be identified; (gg) of the cases in (z), in what way would victims be aided by the imposition of the surcharge; (hh) for the next fiscal year, how much is projected to be gained through the victims' surcharge, broken, down by province; (ii) for the next fiscal year, how much is to be transferred by the government to the provinces for victims' services; (jj) for the next fiscal year, how much is to be provided by the government directly for the provisions of victims' services; (kk) what are the specific services or programs in (jj) and how were they selected; (ll) what is the projected amount that victims' services will require to be fully funded in the next fiscal year; (mm) what requests for funding for victims' services has the government received for the next fiscal year; (nn) in what form(s) did the requests in (mm) come; (oo) how many of the requests in (mm) have been fulfilled or will be fulfilled, and by what amounts; (pp) what specific measures is government adopting, broken down by province and territory, to ensure fully funded victims' services; (qq) what specific benefits and objectives are sought through the surcharge that could not be sought through direct funding of victims' services or additional transfers to the provinces; (rr) are the benefits in and objectives in (qq) quantifiable, and if so, what are the most recent pieces of evidentiary proof that said benefit or objective is being achieved; (ss) how are the benefits and objectives in (qq) being evaluated to determine the effectiveness of the surcharge; (tt) has any direct correlation between offender deterrence and victim surcharge imposition been observed and, if so, what is it and by what measure was it determined; (uu) has any direct correlation between recidivism and victim surcharge imposition been observed

and, if so, what is it and by what measure was it determined; (vv) is there any direct correlation observed between the collection of the victims' surcharge and the rate of victimization and, if so, what is it and by what measure was it determined; (ww) what additional policies are in place to ensure the timely and full funding for the provisions of victims' services; (xx) what measures are in place to ensure the timely and full funding for the provisions of victims' services should the mandatory surcharge be found unconstitutional; (yy) how will it be ensured that no victim will suffer as a consequence of litigation relating to the imposition or collection of the victim's surcharge; (zz) how will it be ensured that the victims' surcharge is effective and (i) by what measures is it being evaluated, (ii) with what frequency, (iii) by whom; (aaa) what other metrics does the government track with respect to the victims' surcharge; (bbb) how much has been spent on the victims' surcharge program since its first inception; (ccc) during the development of the IOAVA, how was accountability defined and how is it measured; (ddd) does the victim's surcharge increase offenders' accountability for victims, and if so, how and by what measure; (eee) how does the government define "victimless crime"; (fff) is imposition of the victims' surcharge appropriate in cases of "victimless crime"; (ggg) to whom would the victims' surcharge fees go in cases of "victimless crime"; (hhh) during the policy development of the IOAVA, what considerations were given to "victimless crime" and how was it determined to make the surcharge applicable in such cases?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

● (1530)

REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE

SITUATION IN UKRAINE

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with the letter I filed with you, it is important that the House of Commons express itself on this grave matter in Ukraine and demonstrate that all the people of Canada, including the Ukrainian-Canadian community, are outraged by the tragic events in the Ukraine. This chamber has one great ability, and that is to speak out.

Since the House last debated the protests that were taking place in Ukraine in December, the Ukrainian government has imposed martial law and is using lethal force to quash freedoms, violate human rights, and suspend the civil liberties of the people of Ukraine.

For those reasons, and for those that I have outlined to you in my letter, I urge you to authorize an emergency debate on this topic.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the member for Etobicoke Centre for raising this matter in the House. I am inclined to grant the debate and will schedule it for after government orders today.

*Government Orders***REQUEST FOR EMERGENCY DEBATE**

MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES IN THE CANADIAN ARMED FORCES

Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in accordance with my letter to you today, I rise to seek an emergency debate on the question of the chronic shortage of mental health staff currently affecting the Canadian Armed Forces.

We do know that the number of mental health professionals in the Canadian Forces has remained constant since about 2008, despite the urgent and growing need for mental health services to our Canadian Forces veterans of Afghanistan and other conflicts.

We have a problem, a bottleneck, in failing to fill these positions. We have had 50 boards of inquiry into suicides in the military that have gone without completion since 2008. We have had a spate of suicides in the last couple of months that have caused shock to the national consciousness. We have further statements on positions that are available to be filled which have not been filled. The current Surgeon General said that in November 2012 over 200 applicants were waiting to fill vacant positions, yet we have seen no action on this.

The urgency is the fact that we have no allotted days available on the agenda, aside from tomorrow, and it is too late today to give notice for that. Therefore, we want an opportunity for hon. members to speak to this issue and offer their opinions as to what might be done. This is an urgent and serious concern for Canadian Forces members and their families. We need to determine ways to move forward in addressing the mental health needs of the Canadian Armed Forces.

For these reasons and those outlined in my letter today, I would urge you to allow an emergency debate on this issue.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: I thank the hon. member for St. John's East for bringing this matter to the attention of the House as well, given that it has been a subject that has been raised several times this session. I understand it is a matter of some importance to many members. However, I do notice that we are into the season of supply days and I am not prepared to grant it at this time.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*Translation*]

RESPECT FOR COMMUNITIES ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-2, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, be read for the second time and referred to a committee, and of the motion that this question be now put.

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to continue my speech on Bill C-2.

As I said earlier, despite all the scientific evidence and literature, the Conservatives hold obstinately and unreasonably to a certain ideology by introducing a bill like this.

I have heard my Conservative colleagues make some incredible arguments in their speeches. For instance, some members believe

that supervised injection sites encourage the use of hard drugs. Others feel that neighbourhood safety is compromised if a supervised injection site opens its doors. Those arguments are completely ridiculous and they definitely fly in the face of the evidence available to us.

I would like to turn briefly to AJOI, a community organization from Pierrefonds—Dollard that does amazing work with street youth at risk of joining street gangs or in very precarious situations. When AJOI was ready to start its activities, people said that West Island had no street youth. It took some time for reality to be accepted and for the organization to be able to take action.

Does this organization want young offenders to be on the street? No. Is having case workers helping youths in the streets a danger to the community or to neighbourhood safety? Not at all. In fact, the opposite is true. These people provide medical, moral and social support to youth in need to help them get out of that situation.

The parallel with what we are seeing in this debate on Bill C-2 is very relevant, and it is easy to understand why. I would like to give you a few facts that have emerged from the experiences of InSite in Vancouver.

Eighty percent of people polled who live or work in downtown Vancouver support InSite. Therefore, these neighbours do not feel threatened by having a site in their neighbourhood.

The rate of overdose deaths in East Vancouver has dropped by 35% since InSite opened. In one year, 2,171 InSite users have been directed to addiction counselling or other support services. I could go on. The facts speak for themselves.

I would just like to wrap up by saying that a number of studies have been done in Quebec. A very serious process is under way to support a position for or against supervised injection sites.

The Institut national de santé publique du Québec stated that sites like these could meet some needs and should be encouraged. They came to a number of positive conclusions after analyzing the facts and the literature.

This is something this government clearly did not do before introducing Bill C-2, which is unfortunate. It is a completely thoughtless way to act and, I will say it again, it amounts to incredible ideological obstinacy.

● (1535)

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Pierrefonds—Dollard for her speech. I have a question for her.

The majority of studies show that people who have a drug dependency or addiction very quickly become isolated. InSite, like many other organizations, is probably the first step toward finding their way back into society and eventually into the labour force.

Some of my Conservative colleagues argued that they could not support a facility like InSite because there was no legal way to obtain cocaine in Canada and that since it was a crime, that would be contemptible.

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Is it not true, however, that InSite, as a transition house, could give addicts access to methadone treatments, which are completely legal, and help them gradually find their way back into society?

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Trois-Rivières for his question.

Quebec's Institut national de santé publique has noted that one of the benefits of a supervised injection site is that it provides a way to reach the most vulnerable members of our society. It is a front-line service for individuals who do not usually turn to traditional health services. To argue that this is impossible is completely false.

The truth of the matter is that the Conservatives do not want to do this. The Liberals also mounted some opposition to supervised injection sites for many years prior to 2003. The fact is that it is possible to make life difficult for such sites with legislation such as Bill C-2. It is also possible to facilitate the opening of well-regulated supervised injection sites, but that is not what the Conservatives have decided to do.

• (1540)

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her excellent speech, and I would also like to give her some new information.

Just before the holidays, I spoke to the Standing Committee on Health, on which I sit, about harm reduction, which is part of the government's national anti-drug strategy. The InSite supervised injection site contributes to harm reduction.

I asked people from the Canadian Nurses Association, the College of Family Physicians of Canada and the Canadian Medical Association if they thought that harm reduction, which includes supervised injection sites, should be part of the government's national anti-drug strategy. This was the case in the past, before the Conservatives changed tack and eliminated this fourth pillar of Canada's anti-drug strategy. They all said that we should keep harm reduction in Canada's anti-drug policy.

Does my colleague also believe that we should integrate harm reduction, to which InSite contributes, into Canada's national anti-drug policy?

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his comments, and also for his serious work on the Standing Committee on Health. He deserves our congratulations.

Yes, I agree with him. I will again quote the Institut national de santé publique du Québec. I come back to this frequently because, as a Quebecker, I am very interested in the processes that the Province of Quebec has followed in giving serious consideration to this matter. The institute recognizes that, in the literature, supervised injection sites are seen to have beneficial effects on public order, such as fewer injections in public, fewer syringes discarded in an unsafe manner, fewer fatalities, fewer infections from syringes, and so on. Supervised injection sites are essential for the prevention and enhancement of public order and public health.

My colleague mentioned a number of important stakeholders who support this type of proposal. I have others here. A number of

associations of health care professionals, doctors and nurses, as well as police forces, support supervised injection sites.

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege to rise to speak to this bill, an act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, or the respect for communities act.

As man advances in civilization...the simplest reason would tell each individual that he ought to extend his social instincts and sympathies to all members of the same nation, though personally unknown to him.

Who said that? It was Charles Darwin. That was a long time ago, but it is more necessary today than ever. There are some opposite who might not agree with what Mr. Darwin had to say.

Bill C-2 is, we believe, another example of knee-jerk, mean-spirited, ill-informed, anti-science, anti-evidence, anti-taxpayer, anti-health, Conservative fundraising propaganda disguised as legislation. We, as parliamentarians, are sent here to make the tough choices. We are sent here to make decisions on behalf of all Canadians to advance our civilization forward, not backward. It is really easy to foment alarm and outrage among Canadians who are not generally exposed to the darker side of humanity. This is the choice made by the Conservatives.

The right choice is to explain to those who might be susceptible to such fomentation that the better path is to create safe places for the darker side that most of us do not see. The explanation that the Conservatives should give would include the science and evidence that providing a safe place for persons who are addicted to drugs, requiring needles, is ultimately making the rest of Canadians safer. It is a win-win. It will not generate a lot of reactionary donations, but it is the right thing to do.

However, that is not how the Conservatives work. They work through fear, intimidation and keeping their constituents in the dark about the truth as much as possible. Eliminating data such as the long-form census, repressing and firing scientists whose findings may not agree with their point of view and deliberately spreading the falsehood that suggests that denying licences to places such as InSite will make communities safer, are not just the wrong choices; they are chosen for the wrong reasons.

Canadians expect their government to protect them from harm. This bill would do the opposite, but it is just part of a long line of Conservative actions that make our Canada more harmful to more Canadians. Conservatives got rid of ways for the police to keep track of where guns were. That action will cause harm to many Canadians, including those in my riding of York South—Weston.

Conservatives cut budgets for the department responsible for meat inspections. This action caused many Canadians to get ill from eating meat. Some died. Are we or our communities safer?

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Conservatives have continued the Liberal practice of permitting the railways themselves to manage their own safety. Clearly, that is not keeping Canadians safe either. The three massive explosions and fires last year, one of which claimed 47 lives and destroyed a Quebec city, are all the evidence Canadians need that the Conservative safety system is not working. Except for a bit of tinkering around the edges, no concrete actions have been taken. Indeed, the present government has consistently ignored the findings of the Transportation Safety Board, and Canadians are no safer as a result.

Of course, the Conservatives' signature piece of legislation making us less safe was the evisceration of the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. Now, the impact on human health, which is what we are talking about here, is ignored by environmental assessments. Only a small handful of projects are subject to assessment.

How are we less harmed by this regime? Add to all of this the changes to the Navigable Waters Protection Act, which removed environmental protection from over 99% of Canada's waterways, including the Humber River, which flows right on the edge of my riding, and we should all worry.

The present legislation is designed to prevent, not assist, the creation of harm reduction regimes in cities in this country. I will explain exactly how it would prevent it.

• (1545)

The new application for a safe injection site must include "scientific evidence demonstrating that there is a medical benefit". Is this to be new scientific evidence? There is a lot of scientific evidence already out there.

It also requires a letter of opinion from provincial and territorial ministers responsible for health and public safety, municipal councils, local heads of police and higher ranked public health officials. If a government is already asking that this be put in place, why do we then need that same government to get its own people to say more about what they are asking for? It is just another piece of bureaucracy that the government is putting into place.

Information is required about infectious diseases and overdoses related to the use of illicit substances. Again, that information is publicly available and is well documented. For an applicant to have to re-demonstrate it is yet another example of the red tape the Conservative government wants to create to prevent these sites going forward.

A description of available drug treatment services is required. Of course the government has cut back on those drug treatment services, but apparently the applicant only needs to describe what is available.

A description of the potential impact of the site on public safety is required. Again, all we have heard from all the experts is that these sites actually increase public safety.

A description of all procedures and measures, including steps to minimize diversion of controlled substances, is required, as well as relevant trends and more information on drug-related loitering, drug dealing and crime rates in the area where the site is located at the time of the application.

Also required is a report of consultations with a broad range of groups in the municipality, including copies of all submissions received and steps that will be taken to address relevant concerns.

These hoops that applicants must go through are designed to prevent rather than permit the formation of safe injection sites to deal with what is an ever-growing public health problem in this country, with which we need to come to grips.

As a result of those kinds of denials and whether they go through all these hoops and the department says yes, the minister is going to say yes or no, as ultimately the minister gets to decide anyway. As a result of that, more addicts will contract contagious diseases and more addicts will die. The needles will be reused and left in parks and other public places. The crime rates related to drug use will increase. Fewer addicts will be exposed to the help they need to beat their addictions. The diseases they contract will be treated in provincially run health centres and hospitals at taxpayer expense. We must remember there is only one taxpayer. This is a federal problem not a provincial problem because it is going to be federal money that is spent. The increase in disease will make Canada and Canadians less safe. More Canadians will be harmed. It is yet another part of the Conservative plan to move Canada backward.

Apparently no Conservatives are prepared to speak to this legislation, but the questions they sometimes ask speak to the misconception that somehow the victims of these addictions are at fault for their addictions and that any consumption of illicit substances is to be treated with contempt and disgust. The views expressed by those questioners are often at odds with their constituents, who view these individuals as victims needing help, and sometimes among members themselves.

We have in Toronto a mayor who has admitted to smoking crack cocaine, to driving while drunk and to associating with persons known by police to be at least unsavoury if not criminal. The outward position of the Conservative Party is that all these actions should be condemned, and yet some in that party who are friends of the mayor have expressed the wish that he get help, which is the appropriate response. This brings me back to my initial statement from Mr. Darwin that as man advances in civilization, not retreats, the simplest reason—that is where we use our minds to think—"would tell each individual that he ought to extend his social instincts and sympathies to all members of the same nation, though personally unknown to him".

The very fact that the Minister of Industry has stated that it is not his job to look after his neighbour's child is an example of the very attitude that prevails on that side of this chamber. Although he has since suggested perhaps that was the wrong thing to say, it is an example of the knee-jerk reaction that goes on in that party, the knee-jerk reaction that creates the kind of sense that we should not be looking after our neighbours and we should not be looking after our neighbours' children. We in this party believe it is part of our job to look after our neighbours, to look after our neighbours' children, and in so doing we will all be the better for it.

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• (1550)

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in his speech the member mentioned about the darker side of society. In my previous profession, I worked for 20 years on that darker side of society, as he called it. I would not call it that. I would call it a place where people have slipped into something that I am sure none of us in this House would want them to. However, some do, and as a result of that we have created places such as InSite in east Vancouver. Arguably, whether it does any good is a question to anyone, but the reality of the situation is that it is called a “safe injection site”. And that is what it is: an injection site. There are other opportunities for those who want it.

My question is again for the member, and I have asked this every time. There is not one gram of heroin that is purchased legally in this country. What do the members of his party think they should do with regard to the safe injection of heroin for those who want it in InSite itself?

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, the point of places like InSite is that, regardless of whether the purchase of heroin is legal, it will be consumed by some individuals because there is a thriving trade in drugs that we do not accept, and none of us like it, but it is there. Just as there is a trade in marijuana and a trade in crack cocaine, there is a trade in heroin, and the problem with the trade in heroin is that with it come some very unacceptable consequences of disease and death and the exposure of small children to very dangerous things. That is the type of thing that InSite is attempting to prevent, and that is the kind of thing for which these places need to exist.

• (1555)

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative Party of Canada is now fundraising on this issue. The Conservatives are out there telling everybody that these InSite sites are going to sprout up like fast-food restaurants across Canada, alarming people into believing something that simply is not true. There are others who are now convinced that this is like going to a spa, where people go in and are given a cocktail of drugs and a syringe and are made to feel comfortable.

I am just asking if the member would describe the very unusual circumstances in which a site like this would actually be created, and how desperate people must be to go in and ask for a needle so they are not subjecting themselves to the risk of disease, but are actually inviting the prospect of rehabilitation by those who are at the site to offer that kind of relief.

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, at the very core of this issue is the issue of addiction. There are probably several dozen, if not more, members of this very chamber who suffer from addiction problems to tobacco and, because they know it is unhealthy and they know it is something they should not be doing, they wish they could stop it, but they cannot because it is that powerful a force. The same is true of heroin, but on a much larger and more dangerous scale.

It is on a larger scale in the sense that an individual is more consumed by it than an individual is consumed by tobacco, although having to leave the chamber every couple of hours to go and have a smoke is perhaps being consumed by it. The point is that it is an addiction, and this is but one way to reduce the harm caused to individuals by an addiction. We have done it with tobacco. We have safe tobacco places all over Canada—called “the out of doors”

generally. Yet we cannot seem to come to grips with another addiction.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to Bill C-2. Before I go any further, I would like to take some time to put everything in perspective.

First of all, we need to understand that any bill is a response to a problem. In this case, the problem is injection drug use. I would like to clarify that heroin is a drug that people inject. Unfortunately, there are several other drugs that people inject. For example, some people crush Dilaudid pills, a morphine derivative, and inject them. Heroin is one thing, but people sometimes inject other drugs, such as cocaine.

Injection drug use is a problem, but it is only part of the problem. There are other parts of the problem related to the sale and trafficking of drugs. There are the many risks related to public safety and the health of users, such as infection and bad lifestyle choices resulting from drug use. There is also an impact on the fabric of our society.

To tackle problems like this, we need to do several different things. The first is, of course, prevention. The provinces try to reduce drug use by taking preventive measures, identifying people who are at risk and taking action at the school level. They also fight drug trafficking. There are programs and houses where people can wean off drugs and get clean. There are also methadone programs to help people overcome their heroin addiction. There are strategically located needle drop boxes, and clean needles are given out to prevent infection. That practice is becoming more widespread and has its own logo. When we talk about distributing needles for injection drug use, it might seem like this is big-city problem, but what many people do not know is that, unfortunately, people use injection drugs in the regions too.

In my administrative region, that is, Abitibi-Témiscamingue, which is a little bit different from my riding, from April 2006 to March 2007, 1,333 users came to see the staff and 10,482 needles were distributed. These figures are quite surprising to people who probably did not think that there was so much drug use in Abitibi-Témiscamingue because there is not much talk about it. In the more rural areas, drug use is very localized. It is often apartments that are used for improvised injection sites. This may be less often the case in downtown cores, parks and backyards. Unfortunately, there is still injection drug use.

This is why action is needed. When we talk about rural areas such as mine and the high number of users there, resources like those in a safe injection site are not going to be effective. The most effective solution involves nurses who take their services to drug users on the ground.

However, when there are many users, such as in major centres where the problem is widespread, it is more useful to have supervised injection centres because of the volume of work for social workers, doctors and nurses.

Furthermore, a safe injection site is more than just a place to inject drugs.

• (1600)

Clean and sterile injection equipment is provided, and users are shown an injection technique that minimizes cross-contamination. Obviously, the drug itself is not sterile, but an attempt will at least be made to minimize the damage. Blood-borne infections such as hepatitis B and HIV are one thing, but people can also contract skin and soft tissue infections by using the wrong injection technique. The staff try to decrease the risk by showing users the proper technique.

In addition, action is taken in the event of an overdose. Emergency care is given. Staff connect with other agencies that can deal with other issues. Referrals are given and staff help make contact. For instance, if an addict is a victim of domestic violence and she wants to get out of the situation, she may receive help in resolving other issues with a referral to other health professionals. If a woman becomes a prostitute in order to pay for drugs, she can be referred to other agencies that help women who have turned to prostitution. The needs of the individual are paramount. Over time, the addicts are helped and encouraged to adopt healthier lifestyle choices.

Clearly, some users have a very long road ahead of them. In the beginning, no one will tell an addict to eat three square meals a day and exercise for 30 minutes. The staff try to give advice that will make a tangible improvement in the user's situation. They will try to ensure a steady improvement. If the user says that he sometimes eats only every third day, he will be encouraged to have at least one meal a day. Centre staff try to minimize the damage as much as they can.

The centres also carry out social interventions. For instance, users can receive housing assistance. If someone has no home, he or she can be directed toward the appropriate resources.

The healthcare professionals at the centre conduct a brief appraisal simply by looking at the person. When they watch a person move around, they may realize that there is a problem. If a person has walked for two days on an ankle that is sprained or fractured, if he or she has an infection or yellow skin, they will be able to take action, provide advice and tell the person where he or she can receive care. This is not the case if a person remains solely on the street with his only contact being the network, if we can call it that, linked to his drug addiction.

If there were no supervised injection sites, these individuals would only come into contact with other drug addicts and dealers. That would be quite unfortunate. At least while they are at the site, they cross paths with people who are not part of their addict

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community and who can help them. Often these are the only people they come into contact with outside their network and the only people they can turn to for help.

Contraception advice is also given at the centres. People are encouraged to use condoms or another form of contraception. Being pregnant is not an ideal situation for a drug addict.

These centres therefore provide assistance on many different levels.

Normally, on seeing that such centres are beneficial as part of a comprehensive approach, a government should provide the tools these centres need to operate, all the while conducting reasonable evaluations to ensure that the location is appropriate.

However, this bill sets so many conditions that it is not even possible to establish these centres. Trying to meet all of these conditions makes no sense whatsoever. The list of conditions is endless. I think it goes as far as the letter "u". It is truly incredible. Setting up a centre becomes virtually impossible.

Concretely, this bill provides for the establishment of a centre, provided all of the stated conditions are met. However, the list of conditions is so long that practically speaking, the government really wants no part of this. This is really not a responsible attitude for the government to adopt, given that it should be taking steps to improve people's health.

• (1605)

[*English*]

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned a few things. She talked about technique. I have never met heroin users who needed to be taught technique. They could probably teach anyone in this House how to properly do it.

The member talked about sharps disposal units. I agree with that wholeheartedly. I agree with the fact that we need clean syringes. I agreed with all of that.

She hit the nail on the head with regard to talking about east Vancouver, which has the only safe injection site in all of Canada. Let us not have that construed to mean that they are spread across Canada. There is one.

The fact of the matter is that they have a lot of nurses who walk those alleys to ensure that those people who want to be taken care of can be taken care of. Not everyone does. Some just do not want to be taken care of.

There is not one gram of heroin that can be purchased legally in Canada, yet we set up an injection site that says, "Bring your illegal heroin into this safe injection site".

My question is for the member's party and the member. What would the member's party do with regard to safe heroin in an injection site?

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[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, of course I would rather people not use heroin. The problem is that people use it anyway. That is why we are in favour of setting up a supervised injection site. The reality is that this type of drug is still being sold.

We are not telling people to come and sell their drugs at these centres. That is absolutely not the case. People will get their drugs elsewhere. It is not the role of health care professionals working at centres like this to find out where users got their drugs. Addicts are warned not to engage in buying or selling drugs near the facility. Addicts generally follow this rule to ensure that the supervised injection site remains open. I know that heroin is illegal, and I do not want to encourage people to use this drug, but I also know that people have health problems and may infect other people. Syringes are discarded on the ground. I also know that some people die as a result of this. In my opinion, supervised injection sites can benefit such individuals. For all of these reasons, I think we should support the establishment of such facilities.

• (1610)

[English]

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened to the question from the member for Kootenay—Columbia. We are kind of talking past each other, I believe, in the House.

In terms of InSite, this is not a question about legality or illegality. The fact is that these products are bought illegally on the streets, and they are going to be used. The real question is how we prevent the further spread of HIV-AIDS and how we protect people's health. The reality is that it is happening, and we need to address the problem.

In terms of InSite itself, I would say to the member that the real issue is protecting people's health, not just users but others as well, including those who might have sexual relations with somebody who is a drug addict.

It is about the health of society and preventing further damage to society. That is what InSite is all about, and that is why it should remain.

[Translation]

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, that is exactly what we have been talking about from the beginning.

The purpose of safe injection sites is to protect health and reduce harm. We know that people are using drugs. Now, we want to reduce harm. Can we at least ensure that these people do not contract HIV or hepatitis B? We do not want them to be compromised for the rest of their lives if they do succeed in breaking their habit. Can we ensure that people who have sex with these individuals will not be contaminated and get sick? Can we ensure that these addicts receive appropriate counselling and care? Can we ensure that they do not end up with an unwanted pregnancy while dealing with their addiction? We respond with the tools and resources available.

Now, the other things are still being done. The police continue to battle drugs and drug trafficking. We are not asking to set up these centres and stop doing all the other things I have just mentioned. It is a question of a comprehensive response. Safe injection sites must be

part of that comprehensive response if we want to achieve real success in the fight against drugs.

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to have an opportunity to speak on a subject as sensitive as Bill C-2, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act. First, we should remember that the government introduced this bill before prorogation. Then, it was Bill C-65; now it is Bill C-2.

This bill is a clear demonstration of the Conservative government's methods and intentions with respect to public health. It values ideological prejudice over Supreme Court decisions; cynicism over a search for the common good; and scorn over a helping hand for our fellow citizens in distress.

Before continuing, I would like to recall some facts that are essential to an impartial debate. The core of the issue concerns the effectiveness of supervised drug use, and the referral of addicts to appropriate care.

In order to assess effectiveness, let us look at the results achieved by the only safe injection site in Canada: InSite, located in Vancouver's East Side. It opened in 2003, as part of a public health project undertaken by the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority and its community partners. The establishment of this safe injection site was a coordinated response to the wave of fatal overdoses hitting Vancouver.

The annual rate of fatal overdoses had increased 12 times between 1987 and 1993, to some 200 cases. Over the same period, the Vancouver area experienced spectacular increases in cases of communicable disease, such as hepatitis A, B and C, as well as HIV and AIDS. From the beginning, InSite has reported conclusive results in terms of public health and safety. The fatal overdose rate in the East Side district fell 35%, as shown in the study conducted by the prestigious medical journal *The Lancet* in 2001.

The main thing, however, is that the centre provides valuable help to addicts by referring them to detox programs. It has been shown that going to InSite increases by 70% the likelihood that an addict will take part in a detox program. Moreover, the benefits provided by the centre have a direct impact on safety and public order in Vancouver's East Side. Since InSite opened, there has been a significant decrease in the number of needles left in the streets. Drug use in public places has decreased. The impact of the centre is so apparent that 80% of those surveyed who live or work in the neighbourhood support what InSite is doing. Even the local police recognizes its positive impact.

The success of this centre is recognized not only at the local level, but also at the international level. More than 30 medical journals, including *The New England Journal of Medicine*, *The Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal*, have studied the positive impact that InSite has had on health and public safety and published articles about it. This success is not random or accidental. In fact, 70 cities in Europe and Australia have opened similar centres to monitor drug use, and we are seeing the same positive impact.

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Instead of helping InSite help drug addicts get clean, the Conservative government is creating more legal impediments and putting out more ideological propaganda. In 2008, the exemption under section 56 of the act expired. This exemption allowed the centre to exist and operate, but the government refused to renew it, which led to a serious legal battle. The Conservative government went as far as the Supreme Court to oppose InSite's right to provide its services. In 2011, the highest legal authority in Canada issued a very clear ruling on this matter. It called the Conservative government's decision arbitrary and even said, and I quote, "it undermines the very purposes of the *CDSA*..."

The court declared that, in accordance with section 7 of the charter:

The infringement at stake is serious; it threatens the health, indeed the lives, of the claimants and others like them. The grave consequences that might result from a lapse in the current constitutional exemption for InSite cannot be ignored.

• (1615)

The court states that the minister must grant InSite in particular, and safe injection sites in general, the exemption provided for in section 56(d), when such a site "will decrease the risk of death and disease, and there is little or no evidence that it will have a negative impact on public safety".

The Supreme Court decision completely repudiated the Conservative government's position. However, not content with having lost, the government is implementing a well-known strategy. Driven out through the door, it comes back in through the window. Having lost in court, it is coming back today with a bill that is contrary to the Supreme Court ruling.

Communities will now have to show the benefits of safe injection sites in order to obtain an exemption and be able to work. In order to do so, they will have to go through incredibly complicated administrative procedures and ultimately submit to the decision by the minister, who will do whatever he wants in the end. We are awash in arbitrariness.

The government's action in the area of public health is based on prejudice, not on fact. The government cannot accept the existence of InSite, even though the benefits of the site have been proven. To support its action, the government is calling on Canadians to support the campaign it calls "Keep heroin out of our backyards". However, this bill will bring heroin into our backyards, into our neighbourhoods, into our streets and in front of the eyes of our children, because it will be almost impossible to open safe injection centres.

The NDP has a clear standpoint on this issue. We are sensible and responsible people. We have a clear-eyed view of the situation, without preconceived notions. We can draw the necessary conclusions in order to manage it for everyone's benefit. Desperate people take drugs. It is a fact. There are solutions that can help them recover from their addiction and preserve their health. These solutions work; let us implement them. We must never forget that the true test of a civilized society lies in how it treats its weakest members. Let us not turn a blind eye to them. Let us hold out a helping hand to our fellow citizens, who have stumbled on their path. Let us help them regain their dignity.

The NDP believes in these values. The NDP believes that any public health decision must be based on facts and on facts alone. The NDP believes that any bill put forward by government must abide by the rulings handed down by the Supreme Court. That is why I am calling on the honourable members of this Parliament to listen to what I am saying. We must work together to throw out this bill that will undermine public health and safety. Let us turn the page on ideological assumptions; let us look at reality full on and develop a constructive solution that will benefit all our fellow citizens and lead to a more just society.

• (1620)

[*English*]

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in her statement, the member said that InSite was created for effective monitoring of drug use. She said it was created because of a wave of drug overdoses, which is true. She also said that InSite has reduced deaths by overdose by 35%, which again is true.

The reality is that InSite was created to monitor those who inject heroin, and for no other reason. Some of the spinoff is the fact that we provide services to help those people get off of these drugs. We do not want anyone on drugs, but the reality is that InSite was created for the effective monitoring of drug use by those who inject illegal substances.

I will continue asking this question to each person in the opposition. Heroin is an illegal drug, which is normally approximately 65% to 70% pure. However, sometimes it can be 90% pure. That is when there is a problem, and yes, a person had better have someone there to help, because people die if they do not have someone there. How would the member's party control heroin being injected by someone who believes it should be safe?

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé : Mr. Speaker, I would like to reiterate what some of my colleagues have already noted: that this is a flawed bill based on a certain ideology.

As mentioned, we are not talking about legalizing certain drugs. That is not the issue here. The issue here is public health.

In that respect, I would like to quote from the statement on Bill C-2 issued by the Pivot Legal Society, the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network and the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition, which reads:

The bill is an irresponsible initiative that ignores both the extensive evidence that such health services are needed and effective, and the human rights of Canadians with addictions...

It is unethical, unconstitutional and damaging to both public health and the public purse to block access to supervised consumption services...

This response contains all of the information needed and sums up this bill, which nothing like what we might expect when it comes to public health and safety.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is interesting that the Conservative member for Kootenay—Columbia asks these questions, and in his questions, he gives the very reasons we need a safe injection site: public safety, making sure there are safe needles, and access to help. The fourth, which was couched in his question, was what happens if people take a drug that may kill them. He said that it is a good thing and that they had better have someone there to help them. That is exactly what the site is about. There will be someone there who will help them.

The Conservatives' answer is to just say no. One cannot just say no to alcohol addiction. One cannot just say no to cigarette addiction. People need help, and they need help here.

I wonder if the member could offer the House some insight as to the desperation of people who actually go to a safe injection site, which is, by the way, not a spa. It is a place that has a little cubicle where a person gets a safe needle and gets help.

Could the member answer that question?

• (1625)

[Translation]

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé: Mr. Speaker, when people talk about drug addicts, it seems as though they lose sight of the fact that we are talking about human beings. We may have the impression that we are dealing with individuals who have been turned into robots. However, in reality, drug addicts are people who have led extremely difficult lives, which, unfortunately, as we know, have led them to use certain drugs.

I would like to come back to how these supervised injection sites benefit the community. In 2004, a study was conducted by the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction that clearly demonstrated that centres like this reach out to the most vulnerable groups and are accepted by communities.

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to rise today to take part in a debate that we began before the holidays, and are continuing now, on Bill C-2, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

Let me recap. People usually cannot take drugs—in this case, we are talking about heroin—but an exception was made for a centre in British Columbia called InSite. People can go there and inject drugs under the supervision of health care professionals. That is why they are called supervised injection sites.

However, for this to happen, an exemption was needed, and the Conservatives decided to take the centre on. The Conservative government clearly intends to close the centre. As a result, it started lengthy legal proceedings that were costly for taxpayers. In the end, the Supreme Court of Canada's decision was unanimous: this kind of centre is permitted. Despite everything, the government is continuing its assault.

It is important to remember why these centres exist. Contrary to what we are hearing from the Conservatives, who ran a fundraising campaign to take on these centres, it is not a free-for-all, where people take drugs and have fun. No, the idea is to protect them. It is a matter of public health and safety. The goal is to ensure that people

who use drugs like heroin do so safely. They rarely choose to take drugs; it is an addiction.

The idea is to ensure that they are not injecting drugs in the street and that they are supervised in order to prevent overdoses. Overdose deaths have dropped by 35% since the centre opened. In addition, needles no longer litter the streets. Cases of devastating illnesses like AIDS and hepatitis have also decreased.

Such centres already exist in a number of countries. There are 77 centres around the world: in Europe, in Australia and one in Vancouver. This initiative has also received support from professionals in the Canadian Medical Association and the Canadian Nurses Association.

Unfortunately, the Conservatives have an ideological vision, illustrated by the slogan of their fundraising campaign, which says that they do not want such centres in their backyards. Despite the Supreme Court ruling, they are holding up the process and drafting legislation to make authorization from the minister a requirement.

Their intention is obvious. Clearly, the government is at odds with what 30 or so serious medical studies have shown: these centres save lives. This is a public health and safety issue. The hon. member for Kootenay—Columbia will certainly ask me about the use of heroin in these centres since he has asked all my colleagues that same question. We are well aware that heroin is illegal in Canada. We do not want to promote heroin, quite the opposite. People bring their own heroin to the centre.

• (1630)

Unfortunately, some are addicted.

[English]

It is not a question of choice; it is an illness to be addicted to such drugs. What we are trying to do, and what people from InSite are trying to do, is to help people with addictions. They can make sure that their health issues are taken care of and that there are explanations on how to stop and how to get away from addiction.

Ignoring the problem does not work. We have seen it time and time again, with all the lives that were lost. The Conservatives are asking us to just go back, but it means that the lives that were saved might be lost again.

[Translation]

That is why the Supreme Court of Canada was very clear. I find it difficult to accept that the government and the Conservatives do not understand that the Supreme Court rendered a decision on the issue and that the scientific community supports this initiative.

The government is choosing to act based on ideology. We knew that the Conservatives do not believe in science. They are at odds with what scientists are saying. They are using prejudice and fear. That is most unfortunate.

I have tremendous respect for my colleague. I know that he worked in public safety before he became an MP. I do not understand why he is opposed to the centre when we know that the decisions are clear and that the centre saves lives, and we can see the whole process that was followed.

Government Orders

To come back to Quebec, since the Supreme Court of Canada decision, Montreal has decided to develop four injection sites. I know that the members opposite said that there was just one site. They are just trying to remove any possibility of setting up a site; they are trying to ignore the fact that the site works. That means that the Conservatives are not looking at what is actually happening. On the ground, people are still dying.

I am happy that there has been this support from the people of Vancouver. It was a step in the right direction, and unfortunately, instead of helping the site, the government put obstacles in its path. It took the case to court, even as far as the Supreme Court, let me say again. However, in a unanimous decision, the Supreme Court told the government that what it is doing makes no sense and is against the law, contrary to the charter and unconstitutional.

Sadly, the government is persisting in closing its eyes and, in a purely ideological approach, is continuing in a direction that really is contrary to public health and safety.

I am not the one saying this. If it were me alone, I could understand that the Conservatives might complain. Studies have been done by scientists. However, I am pretty sure that when the question is put to the Conservatives, they will not be able to denigrate that. The facts and the studies are there. Unfortunately, they are coming to us with a bill like this one. According to legal experts, this bill may once again be contrary to the Constitution and thus initiate another legal battle.

I know they are used to doing this, and it is an approach they follow. Having once been a member of the Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights, I know that the Conservatives tend to introduce bills without really studying their impact, despite the recommendations of the Canadian Bar and legal experts. They subsequently find themselves arguing before the Supreme Court. This costs money.

Speaking of saving money or cutting budgets, something the Conservatives are so good at, why do they not bring us more sensible decisions that begin by taking into consideration what is going on in the field, that is, do what is required to save lives, then abide by the Supreme Court's decision? Why not just move in that direction?

We know that the heart of the problem is that the Conservatives say "not in my backyard". They use that to stir people up, whereas in reality we know that this saves lives. Certainly, it is not a good thing, in the sense that we would all like to see no more heroin in the streets or in Canada. We would like people to stop using. The reality is different, though. What we are asking is that the Conservatives face facts, make sensible decisions and do, among other things, what the Supreme Court tells them.

• (1635)

[*English*]

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, some of the points made by the member in his speech are true. We need to have these types of centres available to help those who choose to come off of any type of drug. However, they have to make that choice themselves; no one can force it upon them.

The member mentioned that there was an exception made for InSite, which there was. There was an exception made for InSite to continue to work. He talked as though the Conservative Party is attacking that site. There was a Supreme Court decision; it is not about attacking a site.

From the perspective of 20 years of policing, there is a big difference between attacking a site and condoning and enabling people to continue drug use. There is a big difference. I believe that with all of the valuable information that InSite provides for those who want to get off of drugs, there is also an enabling factor. Everyone who walks in there can inject heroin unfettered. There is not one person who will tell them not to do it.

Again, my question to the member is this. How would he control the type of heroin coming into an injection site so that it can be injected safely?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

When he asks his question and says that no one will tell users not to inject themselves, he is mistaken.

We know that InSite exists, and so does OnSite, which is there to try to help people to stop using. It would be wrong to say that the goal of InSite is for everyone to have fun injecting themselves. As I said at the start, it is not a free-for-all. The idea really is to do some prevention.

What the member is saying is equivalent to saying that it would be better not to let people inject themselves at a supervised site and let them do it outdoors. Unfortunately, we know that in that case, people will inject themselves outdoors. That does not solve the problem. We have to realize that there is a problem and determine how we are going to take action. Action includes making sure that the people who go to the site inject themselves safely, but it also includes helping them to get off drugs. That is what the member does not seem to understand.

[*English*]

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is such an important issue. Clearly the member has visited the centre in Vancouver, as have I. I am well aware of the importance of helping people turn their lives around. One way to do that is by having these kinds of clinics. They not only provide a facility, but also education and any other health care that is needed.

Has the member had an opportunity to visit the centres? I would appreciate his comments.

• (1640)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Hoang Mai: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Unfortunately, I have not had an opportunity to visit the site. On the other hand, I have read a great deal on the subject. As I explained, people are also talking about it in Montreal. There is interest in setting up four sites. Practical steps are being taken.

Government Orders

This is a debate that affects the whole of Canada. I admire those who struggled to set up the InSite clinic in Vancouver, but I believe that the progress that has been made in this area, and the lives that have been saved, can be beneficial for Canada as a whole.

I believe we have to learn from what has happened, from the experience acquired, and be aware of the problems that exist. We know that we are not going to solve the problem by merely saying, “Say no to drugs”, and everyone will suddenly be able to say no and be cured.

I am not a professional, but I trust those who are on the spot, I have confidence in the fact that there are people who have struggled and gained experience, and that all the experience gained will benefit Canada as a whole.

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since this is the first time that I am rising in the House in 2014, I would like to offer my constituents, all my colleagues in the House, and all Canadians my best wishes for happiness and especially for health.

[English]

I wish a happy new year and much health and happiness in 2014 for everybody.

[Translation]

I am pleased to take part in the debate on Bill C-2. This is a very imperfect piece of legislation that is built on an anti-drug ideology and on unfounded fears about public safety. It is another attempt to rally the Conservative base, as demonstrated by the fundraising campaign called “Keep heroin out of our backyards”, launched only a few hours after Bill C-2 was introduced in Parliament.

However, by making it almost impossible to open supervised injection sites, the bill will actually bring heroin back into neighbourhoods.

[English]

Canadians should be concerned with the approach the Conservative government has taken to drugs. This bill is a prime example of how it refuses to deal with health problems it finds distasteful.

We are told this is a response aimed at shoring up public safety, but the facts do not bear out this claim. Instead, they point to an inevitable return to a situation that places more people at risk than under the current scheme, which actually minimizes the risk to users and society at the same time.

How do we know this? It is because of the outcomes that have been achieved by InSite, Vancouver's safe injection site, operating since 2003. InSite has allowed researchers to study first-hand what happens when heroin use is treated as a public health challenge, rather than a moral failure on the part of the users. The results must inform this debate.

Before InSite opened, Vancouver had been through a six-year period that saw a twelvefold increase in overdose deaths. At the same time, there were increases in communicable diseases among injection drug users, including hepatitis A, hepatitis B and hepatitis C, as well as HIV/AIDS. Since InSite opened, Vancouver has seen a

35% decrease in overdose deaths, along with a decrease in crime, communicable disease infection rates and relapse rates of drug users.

Surely we can all agree that these are beneficial outcomes, yet the government continues to rally against these benefits and prefers to fight for a system that punishes users and the communities they live in, in order to play a wedge politics fundraising game.

The Conservative government tried to close InSite in 2008, when it refused to extend an exemption to section 56 of the current Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, which allowed the safe injection site to operate. That resulted in the Supreme Court ruling that called on the minister to consider exemptions for safe injection sites based on a balance between public health and safety. It called on the minister to consider all of the evidence on the benefits of safe injection sites, rather than setting out a lengthy list of principles by which to apply judgments. Despite the clear instructions from the highest court in the land, the Conservatives' fearmongering on the issues continues.

I agree with my colleague, the member for Vancouver East, who said that this bill has more to do with creating an environment of fear and division than with creating a system that helps our communities or concerns itself with the safety of users. What is troublesome is that this bill does not match the spirit and the intent of the Supreme Court of Canada ruling. Instead, it is designed to work against that ruling and create a situation where everything would run in the government's favour to not even consider applications or, if it does, to simply turn them down based on the principles it has outlined.

It is clear that the government wants this fight. One might even suggest it looks forward to the court challenges that would likely follow the enactment of Bill C-2. We have to remember that it is playing with taxpayers' dollars. The government should remember, while it is engaging in this propaganda exercise, that Vancouver's safe injection site has the support of the police, local businesses, the board of trade and municipal politicians.

While the government is creating a climate of fear based on misinformation, the outcome of Bill C-2 would actually increase the danger to our communities.

● (1645)

When we force addicts into the shadows, the outcomes are predictable: more needles on the streets, greater rates of infection as communicable diseases run rampant, broken lines of communication with addicts, as well as more deaths by overdose. Is that what Canadians want? I cannot imagine that we would.

Government Orders

To help us understand why, we have to ask ourselves who the addicts are who we are discussing. There seems to be a lot of discussion about addicts as if they are somehow second-class individuals. Perhaps we are more informed by television and movie portrayals than we should be, because it is easy to lose sight of the fact that when we talk about addicts we are talking about people. Perhaps it would help to remember that these are our children, brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers, not anonymous people. We have to cut through stereotypes and recognize that drug addicts come in all shapes and sizes and from all walks of life, and how we care for them says much about who we are as a society.

That begins with the admission that the choice we face with this bill is not between safe communities and safe injection sites; it is between legislating with the benefit of evidence or relying on the rose-coloured glasses of opinion. In fact, as they push this bill through, the Conservatives are disregarding the advice of the Pivot Legal Society, the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network and the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition, along with the Canadian Medical Association and the Canadian Nurses Association, all of whom have spoken against Bill C-2.

The Canadian Medical Association tells us that:

Supervised injection programs are an important harm reduction strategy. Harm reduction is a central pillar in a comprehensive public health approach to disease prevention and health promotion.

The Canadian Nurses Association stated:

Evidence demonstrates that supervised injection sites and other harm reduction programs bring critical health and social services to vulnerable populations—especially those experiencing poverty, mental illness and homelessness.... A government truly committed to public health and safety would work to enhance access to prevention and treatment services—instead of building more barriers.

Despite having the benefit of those who work closest with the population at risk, it is clear the Conservatives want to continue with the failed and costly war-on-drugs mentality. This is at the same time as jurisdictions all around the globe are seeing the benefit of taking a different approach to dealing with drug addiction. Australia, the Netherlands, Germany and Switzerland are all working with some form of safe injection site and are seeing the same benefits as we have seen in Vancouver. In addition to the reduction in overdose deaths and communicable diseases, safe injection sites also allow for a stronger line of communication with addicts, through which to educate them about options that may be available for those who would like to break their addiction.

It is obvious what the Conservatives are doing with this piece of legislation. They are whipping up fear across the country at the expense of vulnerable individuals. They are further demonizing addicts to suit their own needs and raise money for political gain. They are dismissing the benefits of InSite and preparing to abandon the project without offering any alternative to deal with the health-related challenges of addiction. This speaks to a willingness on the government's part to see increases in the infection rates of HIV as well as hepatitis A, B and C, as a result of its initiative. The Conservatives are choosing to increase the money spent in our health system dealing with these preventable diseases in order to attack a progressive approach to dealing with addiction. If we were debating this from a purely economic viewpoint, the position of the government would make little sense. This is a case where the Conservatives are showing that their economic management is

limited to a narrow band of issues and can take a back seat to the politics of opinion when it suits their needs.

As the world moves away from the belief that we can wipe out drugs with concentrated punitive efforts focused on users, the current government is moving in the opposite direction.

• (1650)

[*Translation*]

New Democrats would not do that. We believe that harm-reduction programs, including supervised injection sites, should be exempt, not for ideological reasons, but because of the evidence showing that these programs help to improve community health and save human lives.

[*English*]

To achieve that, we must defeat this bill and ensure that those communities that want to benefit from safe injection sites are provided with the process to do so—one that is not designed to frustrate them.

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to read what some of the services are that are provided at InSite. It has 12 injection booths where clients inject pre-obtained illegal drugs under the supervision of nurses and health care staff. InSite also supplies clean injection equipment such as syringes, cookers, filters, water and tourniquets. If an overdose occurs, a team led by a nurse is available to intervene immediately. I am happy to hear that if there is an overdose, they intervene immediately. I think that is a great thing because I have seen enough overdoses in my life to know that no one likes to get Narcan once. Do not get me wrong, but providing these things for the people who are very vulnerable is not about whether they think it is right or wrong. They are just trying to get a fix. That is what they are trying to do.

I truly believe that these types of sites condone and enable. We cannot do that. We have methadone clinics they can go to if they want to. It is an illegal drug and no one knows its purity. What is the party's take on trying to ensure that the heroin is safe?

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, I know my colleague knows a little about law and justice. He is absolutely right: it is not about what is right or wrong; there is an addiction. How do we deal with that addiction? We know addicts are going to get a fix no matter what, so we need to make sure we protect the public. Protecting not only the users but the public is through these safe injection sites.

Let us look at the statistics. The rate of overdose deaths in east Vancouver has dropped by 35% since InSite opened. Those who used InSite services at least once a week were 1.7 times more likely to enrol in a detox program, and that is the whole goal. We know people are going to use, no matter what, but let us make it safe for the people who are on the streets as well as for the people who are off the streets.

For our children's sake and for our future, we need to make sure we do this right, and this is the right way to do it.

Government Orders

Mr. David McGuinty (Ottawa South, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, could my colleague comment on some of the cost implications? In my home city of Ottawa, several years ago there was a very powerful debate about a site where we could deal with addiction. I would like to remind my colleagues on the other side of the House that being addicted is the antithesis of being free to make choices, because people are actually addicted.

In our hometown of Ottawa we realized that the cost of treating, for example, one HIV patient over a lifetime was somewhere around \$600,000. Maybe my colleague could explain to Canadians why this is an important feature of having a harm-reduction site that minimizes infections and reduces health care costs for the country.

• (1655)

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments from my colleague. Health care costs are extremely high. As we know, having this type of program in place has proven to alleviate the use of emergency services, and for overdoses, it has reduced deaths as well.

When we remove the ability to have such a service available, we actually increase the costs in health care, not to mention the costs in our justice system, as well, because we find a lot of people before the courts because of addiction, having been arrested for using.

We have to look at the global aspect: the costs of the courts and health care. Also, there has been a Supreme Court decision on this, and we wish the government would abide by it and not waste taxpayers' dollars on challenges to this type of legislation that it is trying to put in, which does not work, over and over again.

* * *

UKRAINE

Mr. Rick Norlock (Northumberland—Quinte West, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order. There have been some consultations with all parties in the House and I think, if you seek it, you will find unanimous support for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, during the debate pursuant to Standing Order 52 later today, no quorum call, dilatory motion or request for unanimous consent shall be received by the Chair.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Does the hon. member have the unanimous consent of the House to propose the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): The House has heard the terms of the motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

[*Translation*]

RESPECT FOR COMMUNITIES ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion that Bill C-2, An Act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, be read the

second time and referred to a committee, and of the motion that this question be now put.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this will be my second time taking part in our debate today on Bill C-2. This allows me to make an initial comment about the very concept of the debate. I have been in the House since early this morning and, from the moment when we began this debate on Bill C-2, it seems to me—unless I slipped away for a few moments—that I have not heard one Conservative member make a single remark about the validity of their own bill. This clearly raises questions as to the very concept of the debate. In a chamber where we should be sharing ideas and finding solutions, I get the impression that the members of the NDP have been on the same wavelength for hours but the other members are not even listening.

In my first speech on the same issue, just before the holidays, I relied extensively on facts, statistics, studies and scientific articles published in newspapers or medical journals to show the facts. Unfortunately, there seems to be a tendency in Canadian, Quebec and even municipal politics—at every level—to have debates that are based more on opinions than on actual facts. I believe that science and objective facts should still be the basis of our discussions. This does not mean that, because the facts are specific, we must necessarily share the same view at the end of the debate. However, it seems to me that we should at least agree on the basic facts.

For my second speech, I intend to use a more empathetic approach. Let us set aside statistics and studies and try, for a few short minutes, to put ourselves in the shoes of an individual—one of our constituents—who, for one reason or another, has tried hard drugs and is now struggling with a severe addiction.

It seems quite inappropriate to paint society as black and white, or as good and bad, as several Conservative bills try to do, and say that an individual who is addicted to hard drugs is living with the consequences of his behaviour, that it is his fault and that he has only himself to blame. Even if it were true that this individual has only himself to blame—and I do not agree with that—it does not mean he is not entitled to get help from society to get out of his predicament. When an individual is suffering from this addiction, several others who are close or not so close to him also suffer. Therefore, we should rely less on perception and more on reality.

I remember that my late mother—may God rest her soul—was convinced at one time that a young man who tried smoking a marijuana joint would definitely end up a wreck. Even though she and I did not do drugs, we had many discussions on this issue, and I tried to prove to that she was wrong. However, her perception went beyond the scientific facts that I could show. This revealed something even more extraordinary: the fear of the unknown and the fear of something we do not know how to fight. Well, it seems to me there is only one effective way to fight fear, and it is called education.

Looking at Bill C-2, I see that it covers everything but education. If we were to talk about education in reference to a centre like InSite, we should also talk about the neighbouring parks in the community, but I am thinking mainly of the parks that have been made safer because needles no longer litter the park.

Government Orders

•(1700)

Moreover, what is true for Vancouver is also true for Montreal, Trois-Rivières and all small cities, not just the major centres.

InSite is a successful formula that helps reduce crime. If we are really concerned about heroin use—and there is every reason to be, of course—we should also be able to recognize initiatives that reduce crime rates. InSite is one of them.

InSite also helps reduce infections. Addicts can get an infection through injection drug use, but others can get infected entirely involuntarily by stepping on a needle thrown away in a public park.

InSite also helps reduce the relapse rates for drug users. In other words, when addicts choose to go clean to overcome their addiction, organizations like InSite help them and let them reach their goal with a better success rate.

I have some examples from my own riding. They are not injection sites, but agencies that do street work with people suffering from addictions, often multiple addictions, people thought to be hopeless who, for just a few dollars, managed to reintegrate into society and the workforce.

This hardly ever makes the headlines. The government probably prefers photo ops with big cheques announcing that it has funded such and such a program that creates jobs. It seems to me that bringing people back to life also deserves a photo on the front page of the newspapers. Some people might not be as socially sensitive as they should be.

Support is the key to everything. When people decide to inject drugs at a place like InSite, they are no longer alone. They are back in contact with society and agencies that can help them overcome their addiction.

What better way to combat illegal drugs than to eliminate drug users by rehabilitating them. We all know that organized crime is behind the drug industry. Since the crime is highly organized, we have no choice but to organize the resources that will help victims overcome addiction. InSite is one such resource.

I was talking about an agency back home called Point de rue that works with young people dealing with all kinds of problems, including addiction. I had a minor hand in two projects that have restored hope and life to many of those young people.

There was a project back home by an artist named Jean Beaulieu, a world-famous painter and stained-glass window maker. He put people to work 40 hours a week making stained-glass windows (cutting, polishing and soldering) while sticking to the plan. Each piece honoured a celebrity, and at the end there was a public exhibition. More than 90% of the addicts who took part in this program reintegrated into society.

This agency, which enjoyed extraordinary success, has unfortunately closed its doors because the Conservative government stopped subsidizing such agencies. With that attitude toward fighting homelessness, soon Point de rue will also be closing its doors, not just Jean Beaulieu's stained-glass-making project. For a photo exhibit project that was held at the office of the member for Trois-Rivières, young people from Point de rue went to South America as

part of an international support project and took that opportunity to launch a photo campaign.

•(1705)

Unfortunately, since time is short, I will simply say that the values of every parliamentarian here today, whether they are religious or humanist, should instill in us the duty to overcome our prejudices, face reality and do the work entrusted to us—to serve Canadians.

[*English*]

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member said a couple of things in his speech that stuck out. First he talked about the merits of our bill on this side of the House, which I will speak to in a second.

However, he also brought up something very interesting about what is taking place in his own riding that does not have an InSite. He said that in his own riding there are people who work with addicts on the street and understand how they cope from day to day, hour to hour, minute to minute. I remind the member opposite that InSite was created as a safe place for someone to inject heroin. Other people have talked about other drugs. This is heroin, not cocaine or methamphetamines, but heroin. We have to clearly understand that.

The member has a valuable point. There have to be street workers to ensure these people get the message that there is hope for them. They do not need to walk into InSite to find that out; they need street workers to find that out. Again, I emphasize to the member and all other members that heroin is an illegal drug that is obtained illegally anywhere in the world.

There have been well over 1,200 overdoses. My question about InSite is, how do we control the purity of the heroin coming into the site?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, if I led anyone to believe that I agree with Bill C-2 through anything I may have said, I would like to set the record straight right now: Bill C-2 is a bad bill. I decided to instead talk about empathy.

My colleague wants to know how the Point de Rue organization works. The organization has street workers who are the point of first contact with vulnerable individuals. That is essential.

However, the problem is not solved in the streets. Solutions are found when we convince people living in the streets to visit an organization such as Point de Rue. Point de Rue is not an injection site, but rather an organization that helps the less fortunate. Once these people are persuaded to come in, we can help them regain their humanity and tell them that we will support them in their decision to overcome their addiction. There is much to be done.

Time and space are required to build relationships with these individuals. It is important to provide a physical location where they can feel that they belong, that someone is listening to them and that they have a network of people to help them overcome the feelings of isolation that are unfortunately often associated with drug use.

Government Orders

● (1710)

[English]

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I do not know if you know this, but there is a Conservative website that has been fundraising on the issue of InSite. I cannot believe it, but it is alarming people into thinking that InSite is going to be like a spa where cocktails of drugs are available for people to take, and that these InSite locations are going to sprout up like fast food stores across Canada. That is clearly not the case, in either of those instances.

My question for the member is this. The member for Kootenay—Columbia indicated a few questions ago that it is a good thing that InSite locations exist because if people get too pure of a dose of heroin, or they overdose, then at least they are at a location to be taken care of instead of being left on the street to die. I am wondering if my friend agrees it is a good thing that InSite exists to help people who cannot be guaranteed of the quality of heroin they are getting on the street.

[Translation]

Mr. Robert Aubin: Mr. Speaker, it is absolutely essential that we have facilities such as InSite.

The most basic reason is that, as soon as people who use drugs, such as heroin, come to InSite, they are no longer anonymous users who do drugs in the recesses of a park or in a dark alley somewhere. Those persons are now known and recognized. They begin interacting with others. At that moment, anything becomes possible in terms of changing the situation.

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, like the hon. member for Trois-Rivières, this is the second time I speak to Bill C-2. I made a speech before the holidays and, today, I am pleased to voice my opposition to the bill once again.

To begin, Mr. Speaker, I would like to welcome you to the start of the spring session. I would also like to extend my best wishes for a good parliamentary session to your entire team—the House clerks, translators, pages, security personnel and all of the members, regardless of political stripe.

Today, there are many topics I would like to discuss in relation to Bill C-2. For example, I would like to talk about health and public safety, the Conservatives' fear-mongering campaign surrounding the InSite safe injection site and the Supreme Court decision in 2011.

I would like to begin by talking about health and public safety. A safe injection site is a sanitary, hygienic location where intravenous drug users can shoot up under the watchful eye of trained staff, such as psychologists and nurses.

Drugs are not sold there, despite what some might think. It is often the place where support personnel make first contact with a user. InSite in east Vancouver was the first of its kind to open in 2003. Since then, more than 70 cities in Europe and Australia have set up similar services.

Since InSite opened, Vancouver has seen a 35% decrease in overdose deaths. Furthermore, InSite has been shown to decrease crime, infection rates of communicable diseases, such as HIV and hepatitis C, and relapse rates for drug users.

Before InSite was set up, the rates of communicable diseases among injection drug users skyrocketed in Vancouver. There was also a 12-fold increase in overdose deaths between 1987 and 1993.

As a result, community partners and the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority decided to set up the InSite project. In addition to a 35% drop in the rate of overdose deaths, InSite had a positive impact on a number of other levels, in public health and safety alike.

According to a 2004 study by Wood et al, there was a significant drop in the number of discarded needles and injection paraphernalia and in the number of people injecting drugs on the street, just in the year after the site opened.

In addition, 80% of respondents living or working in Vancouver's downtown east side support InSite. Over 30 studies have shown the benefits of InSite as a supervised injection site. Not one study produced evidence of a possible negative impact of a place like InSite.

I would also like to briefly speak from experience. As a mother of a young daughter, I am increasingly aware of the potential dangers in our communities. I am seeing public safety in a new light.

I have already said this in my first speech on Bill C-2, but I think it is worth repeating. Montreal has no injection sites. When I was little, my mom and I used to walk around Montreal. Whenever we walked through a park, my mother would tell me to look on the ground. Whether we were walking on grass or gravel, we had to look down on the ground in case there were syringes or things like that. We had seen syringes before when we were walking in the parks or on the street. I was struck by that. Unfortunately, that is what many people have to do to avoid stepping on a needle, especially in the summer when they are wearing sandals. It is unfortunate and sad, but that is the way it is.

I am the deputy critic for public safety. I did research on InSite to see whether a site like that actually had a positive impact.

● (1715)

Looking at the studies and personal experiences of people, especially those living and working in east Vancouver, there is no doubt that InSite has had a positive impact on people's quality of life and that it has made communities safer, especially in an area like east Vancouver, which, as most members in this House know, is unfortunately a place that is home to a large population of injection drug users. It is a unique little pocket of Vancouver. It is important to be aware of this when talking about InSite.

Government Orders

I believe in the importance of safe communities and to achieve that, it takes work. As legislators, we have a responsibility to not be complacent when drafting bills and to take action in the best interest of Canadians. This brings me to my second point, which was mentioned in the last couple of speeches, right before I rose to address the House. It has to do with the fearmongering and fundraising the Conservatives are doing in relation to Bill C-2. There is a campaign on the Conservative website called “Keep heroin out of our backyards”. I would like to quote from the text written on that page. It reads:

Do you want a supervised drug consumption site in your community? These are facilities where drug addicts get to shoot up heroin and other illicit drugs.

I don't want one anywhere near my home.

Yet, as I write this, special interests are trying to open up these supervised drug consumption sites in cities and towns across Canada—over the objections of local residents and law enforcement.

We've had enough—that's why I am pleased the [Conservative] government is acting to put the safety of our communities first.

It goes on to say:

The...Liberals and...[the] NDP are against us. They want to repeat the experiment of Vancouver's Insite facility across the country — maybe even in your community.

This is fearmongering, as my colleague from Chicoutimi—Le Fjord pointed out. It is absolutely unbelievable that they are fearmongering and spreading misinformation about what a supervised injection site like InSite actually does. What bothers me even more is that the Conservatives are using Bill C-2 to raise money. The more they talk about it, the more they create fear among the public, the more they raise money to fund their next election campaign. It is absolutely unbelievable. It is disgusting. I cannot believe that they are using a topic as important as supervised injection sites to try to raise money. This takes the cake. If you do not have good arguments and resort to fearmongering, as the Conservatives are doing with this, I think it means that you have already lost the battle. Not us, but them. This is even worse than electioneering. There are so many adjectives I could use, but I will leave it at that.

As my colleague from Trois-Rivières pointed out, what happens is that people either start to fear the unknown or are unable to properly explain a subject, or maybe they simply do not understand exactly what a supervised injection site does. They are playing politics here. They are not able to explain why these supervised injection sites are in the best interests of Canadians, in terms of both health and public safety. The Conservatives are trying to convince the public that they are the champions of public safety because of the measures in Bill C-2, but that is not the case. The Conservatives are using these measures to try to win votes. They are also trying to mislead Canadians, and that is sad.

I would like to take a few minutes to talk about the Supreme Court's 2011 ruling. This bill is contrary to that decision, which called on the minister to consider exemptions for safe injection sites as a way to reconcile public health and public safety issues. The ruling urged the minister to examine all of the evidence in light of the benefits of safe injection sites, not to devise a long list of principles on which to base his decisions. The NDP believes that any new legislation about safe injection sites should respect the spirit of the Supreme Court ruling.

● (1720)

That is not what is happening with Bill C-2. The NDP believes that harm reduction programs, including safe injection sites, should benefit from exemptions based on evidence that they improve community health and save human lives, not on ideological beliefs.

[*English*]

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member mentioned that no one has claimed that drugs are sold at InSite. I do not think anyone has ever claimed that any drugs have been sold at InSite. I do not think that is the case at all.

InSite, in fact, would probably capture an area of about 10 square blocks in all of east Vancouver. The reality is that anyone who buys heroin in Surrey or Richmond is not going to drive to the InSite site in east Vancouver to inject. It is just too far away.

Our government has brought forward legislation that clearly indicates and defines, if a city so chooses, how to apply for an injection site.

From the perspective of applications for injection sites, how many sites does the member or her party believe would suffice for the city of Montreal?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Mr. Speaker, my colleague's question suggests to me that he may not know how such sites operate or what measures have been undertaken.

My colleague from Vancouver may know that Montreal is trying to set up a facility like InSite. We are not talking about some guy trying to set up an organization because he thought it might be nice to have a safe injection site in Montreal. That is not at all what happened. The City of Montreal, community partners, the police, psychologists and nurses have been working together to conduct a major study. We are talking about a whole lot of people who believe they need to find a way to make this kind of system work.

With respect to public safety, they have achieved something really important. I would encourage my colleague to read this really interesting report because Montreal is trying to set up a safe injection site.

My colleague opposite asked me a question because I am from the Montreal region. If we had such a site, it would have a significant impact on people who, like me, live in the area surrounding Montreal. Organizations such as Sida-Vie Laval are in favour of that kind of service, with staff who are working toward the same goal. It would have a positive impact on the whole community in Montreal proper and in the surrounding area.

● (1725)

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech and for all the points she raised.

Government Orders

She mentioned that a number of voices have been raised against this bill, including the Canadian Medical Association, the Canadian Nurses Association and many other experts.

Last summer, an editorial in the *Globe and Mail* came out strongly against this approach and the content of Bill C-2. Specifically, it said that, in the clauses and the preamble, there was not one mention of the fact that the supervised injection site was saving Canadian lives. That has been made abundantly clear in a number of ways.

Could the hon. member elaborate a little more on the opposition to Bill C-2 that has come from various sources?

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for LaSalle—Émard for reminding us that a whole range of people and organizations are opposed to Bill C-2.

She rightly mentioned the Canadian Nurses Association. It is important to look at this also from the perspective of health and consider the impact it can have in our communities.

As I mentioned earlier, all those who are working hard for a supervised injection site or service on the island of Montreal are opposed to a bill like Bill C-2, which could derail all their efforts. We are talking about people in the field of public safety, meaning police officers in Montreal. We are also talking about community organizations, doctors and health care services. That is a lot of people.

[*English*]

Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today in opposition to Bill C-2, an act to amend the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act.

I remain very concerned about the government's motivation in introducing the bill in the face of a unanimous loss. The Supreme Court of Canada in 2011 unanimously defeated the government's position on this matter. To read the bill, it would almost suggest that the government has not read the judgment or is flying in the face of that judgment.

It also causes me great concern that the Minister of Justice would see fit to introduce the bill in the face of his obligation under subsection 4.1(1) of the Department of Justice Act, wherein advice from his officials on the constitutionality of legislation is required. However, we know that the standards of the Department of Justice these days are very low in that regard, having had the benefit of a whistleblower who told us that instructions had been sent to departmental lawyers saying that if there was even a 5% chance of a provision or law passing muster under the charter, then it would be fine to recommend it going ahead as constitutional and to introduce the law.

I say this by way of preamble, because as a reformed lawyer, I have many friends who were involved in this litigation. Colleagues have told me that this is simply a bad-faith effort, or at least a patently unconstitutional response to the unanimous decision of the Supreme Court of Canada. They cannot wait to get this in the courts again, not believing that it could possibly pass muster, for reasons I will try to outline in my remarks.

The Downtown Eastside of Vancouver has disproportionately high levels of illegal drug use, poverty, and homelessness and high rates

of HIV and hepatitis C infections. InSite came to the rescue with the approval of the City of Vancouver, the police department, and stakeholders in that troubled community. It succeeded in reducing blood-borne illnesses and in providing access to counselling, detox, and other services that simply were not being accessed by this high-risk population.

As colleagues have pointed out, studies have shown that InSite contributed to a 35% reduction in deaths by overdose in that troubled area of Vancouver as compared to nearby neighbourhoods. The reduction was only 9% in other neighbourhoods compared to 35% in the Downtown Eastside.

This is not the report of merely an academic who looked at statistics. This report was co-authored by the world-famous expert Dr. Julio Montaner, director of the British Columbia Centre for Excellence in HIV/AIDS. In a moment, I will contrast this success rate for the safe injection site with what is happening in my community of Victoria. There is a very troubling difference between the two communities.

There is a worldwide trend that InSite was part of. It is a trend that was outlined in June 2012 in a report by the Global Commission on Drug Policy. The title of its annual report, "The War on Drugs and HIV/AIDS: How the Criminalization of Drug Use Fuels the Global Pandemic", I think is provocative. It is a report from world-famous scientists and other public policy experts.

I found it interesting that in their analysis of places such as the InSite facility, which was referred to in their study, they concluded that criminalization actually encourages unsafe injection procedures, like sharing needles, as addicts hasten to inject in order to avoid detection and law enforcement. That global commission supported InSite and other safe injection facilities.

As my colleagues have pointed out, this initiative was undertaken, long before it was in Canada, in places like the Netherlands, Germany, all over Europe, and Australia. It seems that the current government simply does not get that the Supreme Court of Canada was looking certainly at public safety and also at public health concerns. The Conservatives do not seem to get that part of the judgment.

● (1730)

That is not just me speaking. A number of colleagues, such as Professor Elaine Hyshka, in a 2012 edition of the *Canadian Journal of Public Health*, concluded that the Conservatives' approach to drug use is "motivated by ideological principles of punishment and retribution towards drug users".

It is that part of the Supreme Court of Canada's judgment that I must go back to, because it seems that it has been ignored by the government in enacting Bill C-2 in response to the Supreme Court's unanimous decision:

The Minister's failure to grant a [section] 56 exemption to Insite engaged the claimants [section] 7 [charter] rights and contravened the principles of fundamental justice...[It is also] grossly disproportionate.... [during its eight years of operation, Insite has been proven to save lives with] no discernible negative impact on the public safety and health objectives of Canada...

Where, as here, a supervised injection site will decrease the risk of death and disease, and there is little or no evidence that it will have a negative impact on public safety, the Minister should generally grant an exemption.

Government Orders

Where are we with Bill C-2? How did the government respond to the Supreme Court of Canada's unanimous decision? I say it responded either in bad faith without reading the decision or by ignoring what no doubt was the advice given by lawyers on the constitutionality of this initiative. I say that because of three or four things.

First, the preamble to Bill C-2 says that an exemption "should only be granted in exceptional circumstances and after the applicant has addressed rigorous criteria". What are the criteria? Section 56.1, a new section this legislation would introduce, has some 26 conditions that must be met. Actually, there are 30, because of some subsections; they go from (a) to (z). These are conditions the minister must consider when approving an exemption for medical purposes.

I am not saying that these are illegitimate conditions, but the number of hurdles in the way of a community ever getting a safe injection site are so enormous that it is hard to believe that this is a good faith effort to apply the Supreme Court of Canada's decision. The minister then sent it to the Public Safety Commission rather than to the health committee, again an indication that the public health aspects may not have been taken as seriously as one would have expected.

All of this information would have to be provided in prescribed form. There is requirement after requirement, and it has to be done in the prescribed form. There is no time limit as to when the application would have to be considered by the relevant minister. It goes on and on. One wonders again whether there really was an effort to allow a safe injection site as per the spirit of this legislation.

In the time available, I want to contrast the record in Vancouver, with Insite, and what is going on in my community of Victoria. I am finding the following quote from the coroner a shocking one. Last year, the B.C. coroner reported that there were 44 deaths from illicit drug use on Vancouver Island in 2011. Sixteen of those deaths occurred in the greater Victoria area. He noted that Vancouver Island is the region with the highest rate of deaths related to illicit drug use in the entire province of British Columbia.

The Centre for Addictions Research at the University of Victoria concluded that Victoria's per capita death rate is almost 30% higher than in the Lower Mainland. Just a few kilometres away, a ferry ride away from Victoria, in the community where InSite exists, 30% fewer people die from overdoses per capita than on Vancouver Island, which does not have a safe injection site. All Bill C-2 would do is make it virtually impossible for us to realize the public health benefits that have been achieved on the mainland.

By way of conclusion, this legislation does not address the Supreme Court of Canada's decision in a meaningful and good faith fashion. It will simply provide obstacle after obstacle to achieving the public health benefits that the Supreme Court of Canada found, on the facts, to exist in InSite.

• (1735)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to first commend my neighbour and friend from Victoria for an excellent speech.

This is what has been bothering me about Bill C-2 from the beginning. It is that it is, by stealth, an effort to pretend and feign respect for the Supreme Court decision while, through every aspect of the bill, making it impossible to live up to what the Supreme Court has told Parliament we must do, which is respect charter rights and the evidence that says that InSite facilities are working.

I have been here for the debate all day. Every comment from a Conservative member of Parliament has not been for defending Bill C-2 for what it pretends to be, a protection of communities act, a consultation with communities, but for what it really is: an effort to defeat the purposes of InSite. Every question from Conservatives has gone to the question of how we can possibly have a facility like InSite without encouraging and participating in the illegal drug trade.

The questions from Conservatives throughout the day have been honest. They have been from people who really do not want to see InSite facilities operate. They go to the real purpose of and motivation for Bill C-2, which is to defeat the existence of valuable facilities for harm reduction.

• (1740)

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague and friend from Saanich—Gulf Islands for her comments. I could not agree more with her comments, which I thought were really appropriate, about government by stealth.

The most remarkable aspect of the Supreme Court's decision is its findings of fact, the evidence-based nature of its conclusions. Contrast that with the patently ideological position of the Conservatives.

The Conservatives obviously do not want to do what the Supreme Court unanimously told them to do, so they are saying, "Let us just find a bunch of ways to defeat it through the back door". That is what is going on, and I think it is patently obvious.

Who is going to be able to meet the 30 conditions? No one will, and that is exactly what the Conservatives wanted, going to the point of my colleague's comments. The Conservatives are obviously not interested in going ahead.

They are using this for partisan purposes to attract their base, whereas people are dying in my community for lack of a facility like this. I am ashamed.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc-André Morin (Laurentides—Labelle, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I do not have the knowledge that the hon. member for Victoria does. I am not a lawyer, but I still have questions. Why would a government insist on systematically provoking the courts, scoffing at the Supreme Court and all the other courts that have been consulted in this matter? It makes no sense. Perhaps my explanation is a little cynical, but it is the Conservatives' strategy to undermine the credibility of the justice system because they will be facing other similar cases this year. They will have to follow up on other rulings. Boldly challenging the Supreme Court with a bill that does not work and will again be challenged undermines the credibility of the courts. It creates a sort of permanent crisis in which they can always pass any law arbitrarily, with the minister making the decision at the end of the day.

Government Orders

[English]

Mr. Murray Rankin: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague from Laurentides—Labelle for his observation. I think it is very, if the expression can be excused, insightful.

I think the reason it is insightful is that the government seems to want to pick a fight with the Supreme Court of Canada. Imagine dropping something into an omnibus budget bill to deal with the appointment of a Supreme Court judge. Why? I do not understand that.

I was on the finance committee when I had to deal with this position. From watching on CPAC the arguments in the Supreme Court of Canada, it certainly looks like the government deliberately provoked a fight with the court. Of course, as my colleague rightly noted, we are going to see more of that in the future.

If Bill C-2 is enacted, we will be right back where we started. It is going to cost us millions of dollars in lawyers, and more people are going to die. That is what is going to happen as a consequence of this. The lawyers are all predicting it.

As I said earlier, colleagues who do constitutional law tell me that they just do not understand how this passed muster with the Department of Justice.

[Translation]

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is the second time I have risen in this chamber to debate Bill C-2, which was introduced as Bill C-65 at the end of the parliamentary session.

I am still very disappointed with Bill C-2, which I think once again represents what the Conservative government is all about. It governs the country according to its own ideology and not for the benefit of Canadians.

This Conservative government is ignoring the scientific evidence around the ruling of the highest court in our country. It is absurd. This bill is another thinly veiled attempt to put an end to supervised injection sites, as the government has already tried to do with InSite in Vancouver.

This government is not hesitating to use taxpayers' money to appeal rulings that do not tally with its ideologies, as it did in 2008. I have a lot of questions. The Supreme Court of Canada recognized the positive impact that a supervised injection site has had in Vancouver East, and its ruling was unequivocal:

InSite has saved lives and improved health. And it did those things without increasing the incidence of drug use and crime in the surrounding area.

I would like to repeat that last sentence again: "And it did those things without increasing the incidence of drug use and crime in the surrounding area."

The Canadian Nurses Association holds a similar view:

In Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, where the Insite safe injection site is located, business owners, service providers and residents in the neighbourhood agree that the clinic has had a positive impact on the health of the people who use it and on the health of the community.

That is a fundamental issue in this debate. The Supreme Court ruling was based on section 7 of the charter and on the constraints

imposed by the law, aiming to strike a balance between public health and public safety.

As a health care professional, I find this bill mind-boggling. I want to add my voice to those of people in the field who have criticized Bill C-2, including the Canadian Medical Association, which fully endorses the existence of harm reduction tools, including supervised injection sites, and believes they should be included in a comprehensive national drug strategy.

The CMA's position is founded upon clinical evidence and not upon ideology, unlike Bill C-2. The CMA, which represents all of the doctors in the country, is very critical of Bill C-2:

The unanimous decision was grounded in evidence, not ideology. The overwhelming clinical evidence is that centres like Insite save lives when it comes to some of our most vulnerable patient populations. In its ruling, the Supreme Court stated that "...the evidence indicates that a supervised injection site will decrease the risk of death and disease, and there is little or no evidence that it will have a negative impact on public safety, the Minister should generally grant an exemption." What we have seen today seems to contradict the essence of the ruling.

● (1745)

Harm reduction works. This method has proven to be effective. In Australia, a report on supervised injection sites found that one site had reduced the number of overdoses, reduced the spread of HIV and hepatitis C and alleviated safety concerns related to users shooting up in public places and needle disposal. The report even indicated that the site served as a gateway to addiction treatment.

If that is not improving safety in the community, I do not know what is.

Many countries now have supervised injection sites: Australia, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Spain and Switzerland, just to name a few. These sites work.

It is no wonder Montreal's director of public health recommended, in December 2011, that the city establish such a site in the greater Montreal area. He gave a number of reasons similar to the ones I just quoted concerning Australia's experience. Why? Because they are based on conclusive data that the Conservatives and the Minister of Health have patently decided to ignore.

I would like to quote Montreal's director of public health:

The reasons that justify implementing SIS in Montréal are very succinct: the epidemic of infections caused by HIV and HCV, and the excess mortality among IDU. Cocaine use, the drug most often injected in Montréal, is a major determinant of HIV transmission, as is sharing used needles. HCV infection is also having devastating effects: 7 in 10 IDU have been exposed to the virus and its transmission does not appear to be slowing. As for excess mortality among IDU, the data on hand indicate that the problem in Montréal is alarming.

I urge the government to do its job for once in the health field. Since the Conservatives took power, we have seen the federal government disengage from files where Canadians expect it to play a role. This includes the government's refusal to negotiate a new health accord with the provinces, the shortage of prescription drugs, and diluted chemotherapy treatments.

It is unbelievable and completely unacceptable for a bill such as this, which flies in the face of the Supreme Court ruling, to be introduced.

Government Orders

• (1750)

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her speech. She spoke from the heart.

I would like to ask her, both as a member of Parliament and as a health care professional, if she really believes that the Conservative strategy to prohibit supervised injection sites in Canada will make those who, unfortunately, are addicted to hard drugs more vulnerable. Will closing this kind of supervised injection sites improve or damage these people's health? I am asking her as a health care professional as well.

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, who is also a health care professional, for his relevant question.

It is obvious—and there is irrefutable scientific evidence to this effect—that these supervised injection sites are gateways to health care professionals, whether for primary health care or addiction treatment.

There is absolutely no doubt about that. What is regrettable is that this government has the audacity to put an end to everything that works or bury its head in the sand. That is the problem. It is better to move forward and try to address the issue, instead of imposing coercive measures.

• (1755)

Mr. Dany Morin: Mr. Speaker, I am grateful for this opportunity to put another question that I am dying to know the answer to. My question is rather simple. Since the beginning of her term, my colleague has been doing a lot of work on health issues and, over the years, she has had many dealings with the various Conservative health ministers. Unfortunately—and I am asking the hon. member to confirm my point—we notice that the Minister of Health leaves the public to fend for itself, sometimes by punishing certain groups that do not fit into the Conservative ideology. Pleas are made and the government is asked to protect our health care system and everything related to it, but unfortunately, this is like a dialogue of the deaf, because the government does not really listen to the concerns Canadians have about health, which is a priority every year. Supervised injection sites, which, in my opinion, go a long way to helping people who are going through a difficult time, are part of the health file. If my colleague takes a step back and looks at the whole issue of health management, does she think the government lacks leadership in the health sector?

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his health-related question, which is relevant to our debate. Since we were elected, we have been saying that the Conservative government is not listening to or consulting Canadians. This government refuses to sit down with the provinces and discuss the agreement that is coming to an end in March, just a few months away. We know that this government does not care about the health of Canadians; it cares about the economy. However, without health, there is no economy. That is why we are once again asking the current government to change course and listen to Canadians who are saying, loud and clear, that their top priorities are health and health.

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert for her speech.

The Canadian Medical Association is opposed to Bill C-2 and therefore supports the NDP's position. The Canadian Nurses Association also supports the NDP's position. I would like my colleague, who has plenty of experience in the health field, to tell us why it is important to oppose this bill in order to defend public health.

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for Brossard—La Prairie for his excellent question.

This is a very important issue for health care professionals. This bill is an attempt to hamper potential applications to open safe injection sites even though the sites have had a positive impact on the health of intravenous drug users and on community safety. That has been proven internationally, and no one is questioning it. This bill, however, focuses on criteria and arbitrary decisions. It is appalling to us that a minister would be given the power to decide whether or not a site can open. For that be happening in this House, under a Conservative government—

The Speaker: I must interrupt the hon. member.

The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is my first opportunity in 2014 to rise in the House to speak to Bill C-2, which is an important bill.

I would also like to take this opportunity to wish you a happy new year, Mr. Speaker. Happy new year to all the members of the House of Commons and all Quebecers and Canadians.

What do people wish for in the new year? They wish for good health.

The government's most important role is to look after the health and safety of its people. We are talking about public health and safety. Here we are again dealing with a Conservative government that has taken an extremely ideological position, a position that may well do away with centres or prevent the creation of more centres that improve public health and safety.

Instead of moving forward, the Conservative government is backtracking. Why? Because science, reality, facts and research are not important for this government. Indeed, we have seen this with employment insurance. No impact studies were done. The government is gutting everything. We have also seen it with the tax credit for labour-sponsored funds. No impact studies were done. In addition, no rational and logical arguments could explain that decision.

Once again, when it comes to justice and public safety, the Conservatives are more inclined to rely on fear, on the prejudices and fears of some people, rather than on real results and documented experiments. That is what we are seeing with Bill C-2.

Government Orders

This is the second time I have had an opportunity to address my colleagues on this bill. I am going to repeat the same arguments and hope that I can hammer them in, like a nail. Basically, Bill C-2 is a thinly veiled and almost crass attempt to put an end to the work and practices of supervised injection sites. Right now, there is only one site in Canada: the site in Vancouver known as InSite.

The bill would allow the minister to come up with a list of criteria that is so long, detailed and onerous that in the end it would practically prohibit the sites.

It is odd because this goes completely against the spirit and the letter of the Supreme Court ruling. According to the Supreme Court, under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the government was to uphold the exception under the law for maintaining the supervised injection sites, so that people with addictions can get this type of help. It is their right to have access to it. The law must not ban this in any way.

The government is trying to circumvent the Supreme Court ruling by putting up obstacles to ensure that similar sites are not set up in Toronto, Montreal or other cities, even though public health authorities want to have the opportunity of copying what is being done in Vancouver. Why? Because it is working. Most importantly, it saves lives. We are looking at legislation that might prevent us from saving lives in Toronto, Montreal or other major urban centres in Canada.

The NDP thinks that facts and studies should be the foundation for public policy making. We cannot play with people's lives by fearmongering. More than 30 studies published in journals such as the *New England Journal of Medicine*, *The Lancet* and the *British Medical Journal* have described the benefits of InSite in Vancouver.

I have no idea what it is going to take to convince the government. Thirty studies published in the top international medical journals in the world is not enough. Doctors are unanimous and the Canadian Nurses Association is unanimous. However, the government does not want to hear it and is incapable of listening or seeing reality when it does not fall in line with its regressive Conservative ideology.

What is more, studies on more than 70 injection sites in Europe or Australia have observed similar benefits to the ones we see at InSite. It is therefore not an exception.

The NDP believes that other centres can provide similar services. Appropriate supervision would help our constituents.

● (1800)

The Conservatives say that it makes no sense to help people to inject themselves with drugs. However, we know where those people are going to do it if they do not do it at a supervised injection site. They are not going to stop doing it. They will go into back alleys and parks. Then our children will be in danger of coming across contaminated syringes, pricking themselves with them and becoming ill, when it all could have been avoided with something quite simple.

Sometimes, things happen in ways that do not seem to be purely coincidental. For example, last month, the day after the session of Parliament came to an end, Canada Post was announcing all its cuts to services for Canadians. An hour later, the Minister of Transport

had already sent out her media release saying that she was in agreement. Perhaps it was a coincidence, but it seems as though a lot of information is being exchanged with a public institution that is supposed to be independent of government.

What happened after Bill C-2 was introduced as a way to rally the Conservative base? We saw a Conservative campaign called "Keep heroin out of our backyards". It was launched on their website. It was important to support Bill C-2 because it was going to keep heroin away from our children. However, the opposite is true. The opposite has been proven and documented. We are going to say it over and over again in the hope that the Conservatives will finally listen to reason.

What exactly has happened in Vancouver since the site opened? We have seen deaths by overdose drop by 35%. That is a direct effect. Why did the authorities in Vancouver decide to open the injection site? They did so because there had been a huge increase in the number of deaths by overdose between 1987 and 1992, a twelve-fold increase. At the time, the Vancouver area was also seeing a dramatic rise in the rates of communicable diseases, such as hepatitis A, B and C, and HIV/AIDS, among injection drug users.

The centre was opened and we started seeing a tangible change very quickly. The centre has helped reverse the trend of overdose deaths, which had been on the rise. The number is now going down. This is socially accepted in the community, in the area, and by police officers, more than 80% of whom support the existence of InSite. The site does not simply meet the needs of a drug addict. It also tries to help that individual recover from their addiction.

In 2007, the OnSite detox centre was added to the facility. People who go to the InSite supervised injection centre are nearly twice as likely to enrol in a detox program than someone who uses drugs in the street, alley or park.

In 2008, InSite's exemption under section 54 expired, and the Minister of Health asked InSite to renew the exemption. This decision triggered a series of trials that must have cost taxpayers a lot of money. The B.C. Supreme Court ruled that InSite should receive another exemption. The federal government took the case to the Court of Appeal, then, in 2011, the Supreme Court ruled that the minister's decision to close InSite violated its clients' rights, as guaranteed by the charter. It also declared that the minister's decision was, "arbitrary...because it undermines the very purposes of the *CDSA* — the protection of health and public safety."

The Supreme Court of Canada based its decision on section 7 of the charter, which states that everyone has the right to life, liberty and security of the person. The court stated:

The infringement at stake is serious; it threatens the health, indeed the lives, of the claimants and others like them. The grave consequences that might result from a lapse in the current constitutional exemption for Insite cannot be ignored. These claimants would be cast back into the application process they have tried and failed at, and made to await the Minister's decision based on a reconsideration of the same facts.

Government Orders

After the court rendered its decision, public health authorities and organizations in Toronto, Ottawa and Montreal made plans and asked to open safe injection sites. They know that. Public health authorities in those municipalities are saying that the sites fulfill a need, that they will improve the social fabric and the ties people have with one another, that they will reduce the risk for children and that they will save lives.

• (1805)

I have a hard time understanding why the Conservative government keeps going when it is clearly moving in the wrong direction with Bill C-2.

The Canadian Medical Association said the following:

Supervised injection programs are an important harm reduction strategy. Harm reduction is a central pillar in a comprehensive public health approach to disease prevention and health promotion.

The NDP believes that peoples' lives and public safety should be our main concern. That is why we must fight Bill C-2, which is a step in the wrong direction.

• (1810)

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague, who has young children, if there are currently areas in Montreal where he does not let his children play at certain times of the day. Does he feel that opening safe injection sites might make those areas a little safer? There could be used syringes in the areas where children might be playing.

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for her excellent question.

I am lucky to be the father of a blended family that includes four children aged three to 13. Depending on their age, they are sometimes allowed to play in the alley. We do not let the three-year-old play there alone much.

Obviously it is something we are concerned about. I live in a densely populated urban area where there are problems with drug use and addiction. We have a lovely alley behind our house—it is not green yet, but we will try to work on it—but my partner and I and the neighbours check it out before the kids go play there to make sure there are no needles or broken glass or things like that. We do the same thing when we go to the park. We worry about the sandbox because it could easily hide something dangerous buried under the sand. That is something we worry about.

If we knew there were fewer needles in public places thanks to a supervised injection site, that would be somewhat reassuring.

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, who once again raised the NDP's concerns about this bill, which would create major obstacles and, like many of this government's bills, would give a single minister powers that would better be shared more democratically.

These decisions should never be left up to a single minister because, as we have seen, in many cases, that person does not fulfill his or her responsibility and is not accountable. It is always someone else's fault.

My colleague has brought this issue up in the House many times, so would he care to comment on the fact that this bill once again

gives the minister control over a number of decisions, for example the decision of whether to accept or reject applications for safe injection sites?

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her question.

Indeed, this Conservative government has an unfortunate tendency to concentrate power in the hands of ministers or of the Prime Minister. That is what is happening here. This leads to a growing number of situations where they can act arbitrarily and say: "I made this decision. That is it and that is all."

It is always the same thing. The government avoids consulting, it avoids taking into consideration the views of experts, and it avoids commissioning studies by experts who would inform us objectively and rationally on what should be done.

In the past, we saw dangerous concentrations of power in the hands of the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and, recently, in the hands of the Minister of Labour regarding the definition of danger in the area of health and safety for workers under federal jurisdiction.

This is a shift toward more powers in the hands of ministers. It is also a shift toward arbitrariness and that is really regrettable.

Mr. Denis Blanchette (Louis-Hébert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, since we are here for the first time this year, allow me to wish a happy new year to you, to my colleagues, to the staff of the House of Commons and to the people at home.

At the beginning of the year, we make resolutions. Mr. Speaker, you inspire us with good resolutions every day when you begin with the prayer asking the Almighty to give us the wisdom to make good laws, if I am not mistaken.

This is what should guide us in this debate and in the debates on every bill. We are only here for a while. What will history remember of our Parliament? How will we have conducted our debates? What legislative legacy will we leave? I would not want people to remember that confusion prevailed, or that we did not act in the best interests of all Canadians. The fact is that everyone wants our society to thrive, to prosper and to be happy. I do not think we wish anything else.

This brings us to an important question. How do we define public interest in a bill, and in this one in particular? I want to quote American journalist Walter Lippmann, when he spoke about public interest, because the definition of that expression is very subjective. Here is a taste:

The public interest may be presumed to be what [people] would choose if they saw clearly, thought rationally and acted disinterestedly and benevolently.

We could add to that the ability to see the long-term results of action taken. Clearly, this is a little utopian and unrealistic. However, that is the direction we should be pursuing when considering a bill like this one.

Government Orders

This bill clearly shows the tectonic plates that are grinding against one another, in other words, people's values, which are not necessarily the same, and the law, which the Supreme Court clearly defined, when we are talking about the right to life, liberty or security, and the desired result or what we understand of an action, bill or institution.

Beyond everything else we could say, the real question we should be asking ourselves is this: are we going in the right direction? Will this bill, as it is currently written, allow us to improve the plight of our communities? That is the important question. If we vote for this bill, are we improving the plight of our diverse communities?

Here on this side of the House, we believe that things can be done differently. It is always a little strange to see such conflicting actions. This government boasts about eliminating red tape, but this bill introduces more red tape. The government is not very consistent. I do not know where it is going with this.

Is the government using red tape as a smoke screen, to hide its real intentions? I do not know. However, is creating red tape on an issue of public health really the best way to serve Canadians and our communities?

•(1815)

However, we have a lot of tools at our disposal here in the 21st century. We have knowledge that our ancestors did not have. We have a professional, coherent and non-partisan public administration to help us in our decision-making. I have the impression that we are taking a step backward, rather than moving forward, when it comes to putting public policy together.

Let me give you some examples where I think the government is not necessarily moving in the right direction to illustrate what I mean by that because public interest really is at the heart of this bill.

We have a beautiful bridge in my riding, the Quebec Bridge, that is being left to rust. Is it in the public interest to reduce the lifespan of a metal bridge that is also an image on postcards in my region? Some would say that it is in the public interest to do so, but I do not think it is. Public interest is preserving, maintaining, and taking care of our infrastructure, not being involved in legal wrangling.

Take funding post-secondary studies for example. We say we want to live in a knowledge society. Are we doing what it takes to make post-secondary education accessible to anyone who wants it, regardless of financial capabilities? The question can be asked now. I would like to know that we are contributing to a society where everyone has the opportunity to grow.

Here is where I make the link to Bill C-2. We have constituents who have a serious problem with hard drugs. The current solutions are helping those people to get off the drugs. What does the government do? It chooses to forget that, look away, play partisan politics, withdraw into certain values and not accept reality and see what it could do better. I find that fundamentally deplorable.

Beyond everything we want to do and everything we want, the wisdom to pass legislation in the public interest every day is characterized by the sincere desire to sometimes set aside our own personal perspectives.

We all have opinions on anything and everything, and our values influence our decisions. However, we are not here to promote our values. We are here to serve the public and to look beyond our own individual thoughts to make suggestions that would improve the life for the Canadians we each represent, in each of our different ridings. The public interest is what should guide our actions here.

I have serious doubts that we are headed in the right direction in this case, especially since the government is not respecting the spirit of the Supreme Court decision with Bill C-2. I would have liked the government to find a solution within the parameters set by the Supreme Court. However, that is not the case. Did the Supreme Court go against public interest? Is that truly what my colleagues think? I do not think so. I believe that the Supreme Court set parameters in order to determine the direction we should take. Unfortunately, this bill does not contribute to the public interest.

•(1820)

I would like to be able to say that this bill may improve public safety, but I am not convinced, since needles will end up all over the place. I would like to be able to say that this bill would contribute to public safety, but the government is throwing people whose only desire is to satisfy a temporary, urgent need out onto the street. I would like to be able to say that this bill is full of wisdom, but is it wise to want to go backwards and to refuse to listen to experts? Is it wise to not do something that is already considered around the world to be a good practice? Unfortunately, I think that the Conservative government got it wrong.

I thank the public for listening to my speech. I hope that everyone will have the wisdom to vote for good legislation in 2014.

•(1825)

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his speech and for reminding us to choose our words wisely. We must think things through before making decisions for the common good.

I would like to point out that InSite is innovative. It meets the needs of the community and it came out of the Vancouver community. When it comes to health, we have to be more and more innovative. I think that Canada is a country that could be innovative and play a leadership role. What is more, we are not alone. This type of site has been set up in a number of cities in Europe and Australia. These sites have been recognized as helping vulnerable groups. They are accepted by the community because they improve the health of their clients, reduce the numbers of overdose deaths, and reduce drug use in public, open spaces.

I would like my colleague to elaborate on the innovativeness of a centre like InSite and the importance of it being community-based. It is too bad that a bill like C-2 would eliminate a good initiative.

Mr. Denis Blanchette: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for her insightful remarks. It goes to show how fortunate our society is.

In Canada, we live in a wealthy and educated society. Earlier I was talking about post-secondary education. I think that my colleague would agree that we have the means to provide our constituents with all the innovation, technology and cutting-edge knowledge humanity possesses. We are that fortunate. We have the knowledge and the means to show leadership in problem-solving, regardless of the problem. In this case we are talking about addictions and prevention. We want to be able to contain certain unfortunate practices. My colleague is right to say that we must focus more on innovation. She is also right to say that we must move forward and implement modern solutions. She is right to say that we must use our knowledge for the good of the people.

EMERGENCY DEBATE

● (1830)

[English]

UKRAINE

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the consideration of a motion to adjourn the House for the purpose of discussing a specific and important matter requiring urgent consideration, namely the situation in Ukraine.

Mr. Ted Opatz (Etotobicoke Centre, CPC) moved:

That the House do now adjourn.

He said: Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing this very important debate this evening. It is of urgency, not only and specifically to the Ukrainian people but also to the very strong, committed Ukrainian diaspora here in Canada.

Our government is very engaged in closely monitoring what is happening in Ukraine. We are consulting with our allies intimately in weighing all options, including sanctions. However, we need to be precise in our actions. That is the most important thing, because if we are not precise, ordinary Ukrainians will potentially be hurt by what we and other governments and our allies do.

I thank the Prime Minister for supporting this emergency debate. He said recently that Canada stands with the Ukrainian people during this difficult time and will continue to forcefully oppose all efforts to repress their rights and freedoms. In fact, our Minister of Foreign Affairs went to Maidan himself last month as well as speaking to his counterpart in Ukraine, expressing Canada's outrage about what is going on in Ukraine today, the killing, the intimidation of religious groups, the repealing of human rights and the Orwellian imposition of draconian laws.

I also had the opportunity to be in Ukraine in December, where I was observing the re-run elections and where I also had the opportunity to walk to Maidan on two different occasions. It was a tremendous opportunity to see how peaceful the protesters were, how well organized they were, and what their goals were in relation to the Ukrainian people.

This is a peaceful group of people who just want to reach out to their government and express the will of the majority of Ukrainians, that they would like to have closer association with the EU, a closer association with Europe. All they are asking for is the ability to

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choose their own fate, but what has often happened in Ukraine and is happening right now is the insidious creep of tyranny. This is something that concerns me, because we have seen it among repressive and authoritarian governments in other places in the world in the past. Ukraine has endured a bad time.

Mr. Speaker, I am splitting my time with the member for Selkirk—Interlake.

The people of Ukraine would like to be able to move in that direction, but these draconian laws are stifling human rights. Following peaceful demonstrations the state is now applying violence where numbers of people, somewhere between seven and ten key leaders of the opposition movement, have turned up dead with evidence of torture on their bodies.

We have seen all over YouTube the videos of protesters being stripped, humiliated, beaten, shot with rubber bullets. We have seen journalists particularly targeted by rubber bullets to the head. This is an effort to stifle communications and opposition groups' ability to coordinate across the country. This is absolutely horrific, something that we cannot possibly fathom.

We saw the case of Tetyana Chornovil, someone who was run off the road, beaten senseless until she was believed to be dead and then abandoned. Fortunately, she survived the attack to tell her tale, and of course there is evidence from the webcam she had in her car. People have been arrested in connection with that. This situation is dramatic and ongoing, and we must fight tooth and nail against it and stand with the people of Ukraine, who only desire peace, freedom and democracy, just as any family in Canada would like. They want some prosperity and the ability to have a future, hope and options in their country.

That is what the EU provides. The EU provides options. It is not one or the other. It is something that is being imposed by external factors.

● (1835)

We in Canada have the NAFTA agreement and CETA. We have trade negotiations going on with other nations, and that is only healthy. It provides our nation with job building and economic opportunity and options that help not only to grow our own economy but also the economies of the other nations that we have agreements with. That is all the Ukrainians are asking for. It should not be one or the other, but the situation is being artificially and externally applied to them.

In fact, we recently saw Russia drop the price of Ukrainian gas dramatically. I said in our take note debate on December 10 that with one word from Mr. Putin the price of gas would drop, and lo and behold a week later it was dropped. That may not have been anything I said but it is definitely curious to me that it happened very quickly. As well Russia propped up Ukraine with the promise of \$15 billion for its bonds. This is artificially applied pressure and something that unfortunately has led to a very serious and deteriorating situation in Ukraine, where protestors are now lying dead because live ammunition has been used against them.

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There is also the issue of the repression of religious freedom. We have done something concrete. The Minister of Foreign Affairs dispatched our Ambassador for Religious Freedom, Andrew Bennett, to Ukraine over the weekend for him to investigate. The ambassador has reported back that a tremendous amount of oppression is going on.

This is a very dangerous precedent. The minister of culture in Ukraine has threatened the Ukrainian Greek Catholic church with dissolution. The last time that happened was in the 1940s when Joseph Stalin also threatened it with dissolution. This is harking back to very dark days that we thought we had moved past in Ukraine. Ukrainians do not deserve the kind of authoritarian template that is being imposed on them today, after two decades of seeking to improve their economy, to strengthen their democracy and to open up their economic options so that all people of Ukraine can benefit from that.

There is a set of elites in Ukraine dictating policy for their own selfish interests. They are subordinating the will and the prosperity of their fellow Ukrainian citizens to their own selfish interests. They are very few in number in Ukraine. This is a dangerous precedent because this will become a regime and then the benefits for a few will always outweigh the benefits for the majority. That cannot happen. Canada must stand with the Ukrainian people. We support their drive for freedom and democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and balanced justice and gender equality.

Ukrainians are not asking for much. They are just asking for the same things that we enjoy here in this country and that any western democracy enshrines in its own codes. This is something that the Ukrainian people now deserve and it is something that we have to help them achieve.

We will always condemn the horrible use of violence against the protestors in Ukraine.

We also note the crucial role played by the clergy and the faithful in the Ukrainian Greek Catholic church and other religious leaders with whom we are encouraging dialogue.

We have a lot of work to do, but this is not all bad. A lot of the pressure that we are putting on Ukraine and its leaders right now has had some positive results. Tomorrow, Baroness Catherine Ashton will be working with Ukraine to bring forward a plan. Right now, the government is working with opposition members and is crafting a plan.

All of that is positive. However, we have yet to see the proof in all of this. We remain somewhat skeptical but optimistic. However, this government will retain its pressure on Ukrainian leaders. We will remain vocal. We will remain committed to the people of Ukraine. We will stand side by side with them until they achieve their goals of freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

• (1840)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his intervention. He gave a good overview of recent events in Ukraine. He talked passionately about his own point of view.

What we are grappling with now, and will be during this debate, is how to respond. Things are changing on the ground. Things are fluid, as was noted, and will continue to change.

We hope that tomorrow will bring some sort of resolution from the diplomatic efforts we have seen by Baroness Ashton and others.

Last week, I wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and put forward a unanimous consent motion on Friday, which we eventually negotiated and saw the House pass today.

However, we wanted to see targeted sanctions. I think it is very clear, and I think my colleague will understand, that we really should have targeted sanctions on the leadership or people involved with what we have seen, the draconian laws and human rights abuses.

I would like to hear his point of view on that. Is it something he could agree to with us, that we have these targeted sanctions put in place?

Mr. Ted Opitz: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for his support for the debate this evening. I think all members of the House are consumed with this. We all have constituents who are very concerned about what is going in Ukraine.

In responding to the hon. member, as I said in my remarks, our government is working very closely with all of our allies, the Americans, the EU, and others concerned in this regard.

In terms of targeted sanctions, they are definitely an option that is being considered, in accordance and in concert with our allies.

However, as I also said, it is crucial that when and if any of those options, including sanctions, are applied that they be applied with precision, so that the leadership and those being targeted are the ones affected and not innocent Ukrainian people.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when the House adjourned for the Christmas season, I think one of the very final acts of official business that we conducted in the chamber was to debate the situation in Ukraine as it existed in early December.

At that time, in the debate, I raised, several times, this issue of targeted personal sanctions against Yanukovich and his inner circle, the need to apply pressure to encourage more democratic behaviour.

The government was not in a position to respond officially at that time back at the early part of December. However, it is now two months later and the situation has, sadly, deteriorated. The violence has become worse, and as the hon. member noted, even the Catholic Church is being threatened by certain actions by Yanukovich.

I would like to ask this question, not in any provocative way, but in the sense of building consensus, moving forward and getting ready to deal with the situation, to make it clear to Yanukovich that the world is watching, that we care and that we take this very seriously.

What specifically has the government been able to do over the course of the last two months to get ready for the application of personal targeted sanctions? For example, have the assets been identified? Do we know where they are? Have we opened a dialogue with European countries and the Americans to ensure that we can act with precision and in concert to make these provisions effective against Yanukovich's inner circle?

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Mr. Ted Opitz: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his question and, again, for his engagement in this issue, which is very important to the Ukrainian community in Canada.

As I said, we are, and have been for quite some time now, deeply involved with our allies to coordinate all of our efforts to ensure that precise measures are applied.

Also, a lot has happened in two months. Absolutely. In fact, as late as today, as I have just pointed out, there is dialogue happening between the government and the opposition forces. There is dialogue happening with the UN Secretary-General, who has offered himself as mediator. There is dialogue happening with the EU, with Baroness Ashton, now interacting with Mr. Yanukovich and his government.

A lot of that has to do with the pressure that we laid on, including the very pointed discussion that the Minister of Foreign Affairs has had with his counterpart in Ukraine, as well from having called in the Ukrainian ambassador and expressing Canada's outrage to him about what is occurring in Ukraine.

• (1845)

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, *dobry vechir*. It is a pleasure to rise today to talk about the concerns that all of us have with respect to what is happening in the Ukraine, and everything that has transpired, especially over the past week.

I want to thank you for granting the request of my friend and colleague, the member for Etobicoke Centre, to have this emergency debate tonight. We want to make sure we are raising awareness in Canada of the deteriorating circumstances, which we see on the news every minute and hour, of everything that is transpiring on the streets of Maidan in Kiev, and other communities in the Ukraine. We also want to demonstrate to the people and the government of Ukraine that Canada's Parliament is strongly opposed to all of the actions it has taken.

I want to thank all members in the House for the unanimous passing of the motion that I moved earlier today. It was done with great collaboration and negotiations, amongst all political parties, to come to a resolution that speaks to how we in Canada feel about the government of the Ukraine under the leadership of President Viktor Yanukovich, and the deterioration of civil rights, erosion of human rights, and the continued decline of democracy and the rule of law in Ukraine.

The motion we passed earlier today is that we condemn the draconian law that was passed on January 17. There was a small opportunity presented in the Ukraine earlier today, and we heard before the debate started tonight that the Yanukovich government is prepared to consider repealing that draconian law. We have to be careful here. Will it repeal the entire law that was passed, or only provide some cosmetic surgery to make it more appealing to us in the west without necessarily changing the way it is behaving, especially the way the Berkut, the riot police, are behaving on the streets of the Maidan. We want to make sure that what will be debated tomorrow in the Ukraine's parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, actually does repeal that entire piece of legislation, from the beginning to the last word in that act. That is what we want to see happen.

As I said in the motion that we agreed to earlier today, the Government of the Ukraine has to realize that the draconian law, which allows them to move forward with martial law, undermines freedom and democracy in the Ukraine. We must remember that Ukraine has lived under tyranny and dictatorship for most of the past several hundred years. It has only truly enjoyed freedom and democracy since it was able to peacefully proclaim independence in 1991. Here we are, almost 23 years later, and that democracy, which was so fragile, has been ruthlessly undermined by President Viktor Yanukovich and his government.

I was in Ukraine monitoring the presidential elections of 2010 when President Viktor Yanukovich won. I was back there in 2012 for the parliamentary elections. I can say that the people of Ukraine never voted for this type of governance. They want their voices to be heard. That is what the protests that have been taking place for the last two and a half months in Kiev and other cities are about. They are disappointed in their government. They are disappointed that it walked away from the European co-operative agreement and closer trade relationships with Europe. They are upset that the government of Ukraine continues to slide more and more, that it is becoming entrenched with the Russian government, that it is not acting as a free and independent country, and that it is quashing the civil liberties, rights and freedoms of everyone who lives in Ukraine.

• (1850)

Earlier today, we all condemned the violence. We are saddened by the deaths that have occurred. We know there are hundreds of innocent protesters, many of whom have been targeted by using cellphones. Journalists have been specifically targeted, as have academics. As we often see in dictatorships and totalitarian regimes, those who are in power go after the intellectuals. These people have been imprisoned, and we have not heard from them.

We know about the people who were killed on the streets. At least two of them were killed by sniper fire. Despite this, we have not heard about the others who have been arrested. There are allegations that they have been tortured.

We have not heard about what is happening with so many who were arrested in hospital. After some of the riots occurred on the streets of Kiev, people went to the hospital to get treatment. The police came in, arrested them and denied them treatment. Many of them were taken outside the city and dumped in the forest. We know of at least one death that resulted from that.

We want to express our condolences to the friends and families who have lost their loved ones. We saw one of the funerals yesterday and how everyone rallied around and proclaimed him a hero.

The Ukrainian government, and probably the International Criminal Court, has to look into what has occurred here. Those who are responsible for the violence and brutality against innocent activists have to be brought to justice. They have to face the consequences and be held to account.

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We are going to continue to call on Ukraine. Tomorrow, in the Ukrainian parliament, MPs will have their debate and hopefully repeal that entire draconian law. However, the Ukrainian security forces have to be removed from the streets. They have to allow the people the chance to take a step back, evaluate the situation, and continue with their peaceful protests until the government respects their wishes. We have to see that happen.

A lot of questions are going to be asked tonight about what actions we can take as a nation. The Government of Canada is engaged with like-minded nations in Europe, as well as the United States and others, to bring an international resolution, one that can turn the tables on the current government to allow it to make the right decisions and start working toward a new election. It should make sure that the election laws it has been gerrymandering for the last two years are fixed so that Ukraine can have free and fair elections for the presidential elections at the end of this year.

There is a lot of work to be done. It has to be done on a diplomatic level. We are starting to see some of those diplomatic interventions coming to bear. Our ambassador of religious freedom, Andrew Bennett, is on the ground, looking at the whole issue of the attack on the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and how it has been singled out and threatened for providing pastoral services to its parishioners and others who are on the street.

I am glad we were able to pass this resolution earlier today. I know that all of us stand united in solidarity with the people of Ukraine. We know that Canadian Ukrainians across the country are watching the events unfold very carefully. I have been providing a lot of advice, and I say to them and the people of Ukraine, *Slava Ukraini*.

• (1855)

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before to previous speakers, this is something we want to work together on. We want to see action.

One of the things I talked about earlier was targeted sanctions. We had hoped to have that in the unanimous consent motion that we passed today. However, we will talk about that further.

It is not only that we should have targeted sanctions, for obvious reasons, but we want to make sure the government uses the tools it has to get at the problem. The problem right now is that we have certain actors within the Ukraine government who are abusing their power and the monopoly of violence they have at their behest.

There is one other thing, and I want to put it to my friend. We have been asked by others for travel bans. That is something we called for when we had egregious laws passed by the Duma in Russia, to have targeted and focused visa bans on those legislators who were responsible for those laws.

I wonder if the member would be in favour of visa and travel bans. Would the government be in favour of working with the Red Cross and using our embassy to help people who have been injured? We know some of the medical facilities have been shut down. Protestors have been hurt; some have been killed. Would the government be willing to look at that as something we could do?

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, civil society here in Canada, as well as all sorts of non-government organizations like the Red Cross, are great organizations. The government should be engaging and

working along with them. How any of those organizations that go over there would be received is hard to say.

We definitely have to make sure that every diplomatic tool is evaluated and looked at. We want to make sure that as we go forward in collaboration with our international partners that we are very precise in bringing about the change that we and the people of Ukraine want to see. First and foremost, this is about the people of Ukraine and respecting their will.

We have to make sure that how we move forward is going to bring about that change most effectively. We want to make sure that any action we take does not result in any unintended consequences that will hurt the people of Ukraine.

We will be collaborating and working very closely. Hopefully, we will see a concerted effort to have a very powerful resolution that will make the changes that all of us so desperately desire.

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. gentleman for his comments and his obvious concern about the situation in Ukraine.

I will leave the issue of targeted sanctions aside for just a moment. I take it that the government is actively examining how to do this in concert with allies. I hope the suggestion is taken seriously and constructively.

There are two other ideas that I think could be very helpful in these circumstances, and I wonder what the government's reaction is to them. First, there could be a special expedited and no-cost Canadian visa regime available to injured protestors if they needed to leave the country to receive medical treatment, for example, to family members of protestors who have been killed, and to family members of protest organizers whose lives may be in jeopardy. Would the government consider an expedited no-cost visa regime to allow these people to easily leave Ukraine and come to Canada in these very difficult circumstances?

Second, would the government consider a team of very high-level senior observers to be sent, through our embassy in Kiev, to scrutinize and document the police behaviour, court proceedings against protestors, and the treatment of the injured as they are brought into and managed in hospitals, and to monitor bodies arriving in Kiev morgues? Would that team of—

• (1900)

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

Mr. James Bezan: Mr. Speaker, those are great ideas. I know a lot of ideas are coming forward from the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and others, who have boots on the ground and are watching everything unfold.

I know that our ambassadors, Ambassador Troy Lulashnyk, and Ambassador Andrew Bennett, the ambassador for religious freedoms, are monitoring and putting together detailed reports. Many of us have been getting some of the reports, both from the media and the Department of Foreign Affairs, as to how things are unfolding.

It is critical at this point. Ukraine stands at a crossroads. We have to be there to help in supporting them to come to the right decision, both from a government standpoint and definitely respecting the will of the people of Ukraine.

Again, I thank the Speaker for having this emergency debate.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring forward our party's position and to debate with my colleagues the situation in Ukraine. It was just recently, before the House rose for the Christmas break, that we were actually seized with this issue. At that time we had a take note debate, and now we are debating an emergency motion about the situation in Ukraine.

We are focused tonight not only on what is happening on the ground, and I will talk about that, but also on what we can do. I said, when I rose in December and spoke to the issue during the take note debate, that we had to ensure that the dream of the Ukrainian people would not be stolen. I was referring to the dream they had in 2004—when those historic elections happened, when many Canadians were on the ground ensuring there were fair elections—would not be taken away. That is what we are talking about and debating tonight. That is what the people of Ukraine are doing in frigid temperatures, with a fairly aggressive response. They are peacefully demonstrating to ensure that their dream is not taken away, that no one is going to extinguish the dream that we take for granted here. That is the right to assemble, to have fairness and a democratic system that would actually be represented in its legislative affairs.

That is not what is happening now. As we were debating in the House of Commons in December, there were demonstrations happening in real time. The response from the government was to crack down and use the force of the police against peaceful demonstrators. We have seen this descent into chaos because of a repugnant response by the Ukrainian government.

December 10, as we were debating this, was exactly when the Ukrainian officials were using force to dismantle the peaceful demonstrations by everyday Ukrainians. Five days later the EU commissioner stated that the Ukrainian government would not sign the EU agreement that President Yanukovich had said he would sign. In fact, we hoped we would see the Ukrainian government embrace and re-engage with the EU to sign an economic agreement with it, which is what the promise was. It turned its back not just on the agreement but on the Ukrainian people. What we saw directly after that was President Yanukovich and Putin signing a \$15 billion loan package and gas deal that sells out several of the strategic sectors of Ukraine's economy and contains provisions regarding the Black Sea fleet and policing. In other words, Ukraine went from going to engage with the EU, which is what people wanted to see and the people of Ukraine were asking for, and it pivoted over to sign a deal with Mr. Putin and sell out many of the assets and oversight of the Ukrainian people to an exclusive couple.

This is why we believe targeted sanctions are necessary. Make no mistake; we are talking about the theft of many of the riches and resources out of Ukraine being spirited over the border, mostly in places like Europe, we hear. Clearly we can send a signal here to say, "If you are responsible for the heinous crackdown we have seen on innocent protestors then your finances are not welcome here". We will bring in sanctions. We will bring in travel bans here because

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Canada has to be strong and resolute with the Ukrainian people. That is exactly what we are talking about here today.

That is why last week I wrote to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and asked him to consider sanctions, to be very clear and declarative about our abhorrence of the use of violence against everyday protestors and about the draconian laws that were just passed on the 16th.

● (1905)

Further to that, on Friday I engaged with the government about passing a unanimous consent motion, which we put forward. We negotiated with the government, and we did pass the motion today. I had put forward the language from our party, which we did not pass, but we negotiated with the government to pass the motion.

Our motion actually said that this House condemns the killing and injuring of peaceful protestors and other alarming violations of freedom of speech and association in Ukraine and requests that the Government of Canada take strong action in consultation with our international partners, including individual sanctions against those responsible for human rights abuses, repressive measures and violent crackdowns. What we had in our motion, which the Conservatives decided not to embrace yet and we will continue to try to convince them, is that we should have individual sanctions.

Just as an aside, it is important to note that we do not have to pass a law to bring in individual sanctions. Through the Special Economic Measures Act, the government can do it on its own. So this could have happened in December if the government chose. This is not something that is difficult to do; it is whether the Conservatives want to do it, and I strongly encourage them to do so.

However, we also have to look at what other actions we can add to the toolkit. Not only would I like to look at visa bans and of course the sanctions, but we need to work with our colleagues. By the way, the U.S. has already brought in visa bans. That should be of note. However, we need to work with our friends in the EU, and we hope that negotiations with the EU, which we hear are going to take place tomorrow, are successful. However, we have seen this before. As members know, the member for Churchill went to Kiev and tried to convince the government to change its ways. There was a promise by the government at that time that it would engage with the EU, but we saw that it went back on that promise. We need to work in concert with our allies.

I give credit to the Ukrainian Canadian community for organizing and for being resolute and putting forward ideas that we can look to embrace. In particular, all of us were sent a brief by the Ukrainian Canadian Congress. It put forward some ideas we should look at, and we have already discussed some of them.

The brief recommends that our Prime Minister directly call President Yanukovich, demanding that he bring an end to the state-sanctioned killings, violence, reprisals and intimidation. He could offer for Canada to serve as a mediator to bring a peaceful resolution to this conflict. Canada is widely respected in Ukraine. I have already mentioned our past in terms of the 2004 election. We have been there, so we should offer that.

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It is calling for sanctions: the imposition of visa restrictions and travel bans for those who are responsible for these horrific crackdowns.

It says that the Canadian embassy could be there to assist, if need be, with medical treatment of those who have been hurt or injured.

It suggests we expedite visas and asylum for those who are needing to flee.

It recommends that we also look at ensuring that—though it is not always possible, but we put the ideas forward—if Canada can, it send independent observers to document what is going on, as was mentioned earlier by one of my colleagues.

These are very straightforward propositions put forward by the Ukrainian Canadian Congress. However, Ukrainian Canadians have been very focused on the fact that we have to be vigilant about what Yanukovych is putting forward. I say this with all respect to another government. When we have a president like President Yanukovych who has said he would embrace and engage with the EU and then does not and has said he will negotiate openly and then does not, we have to be very careful and cautious in how we respond when he says he is going to pull back the draconian laws. That is what we are just hearing as of half an hour ago. We have to ensure that actually happens. Also, when he says he would have power-sharing and share the office of the prime minister with the opposition leader, we have to remind Mr. Yanukovych what the protestors and the people are saying. It is not for him to decide who the prime minister is. It is not for him to decide whether laws that are retrograde should go forward. It is what the people of the Ukraine demand. That is why there are elections.

● (1910)

In the elections before Christmas, there were many reports of abuse. The 2004 elections were about finally allowing the Ukrainian people to have their voices heard, with the international community there.

Make no mistake about what the Ukrainian Canadians and the Ukrainians are saying. They are saying, "Do not just do deals, President Yanukovych. Actually act and open the door to the people of Ukraine and their demands". That is what this is about. It is not about cutting deals or about power-sharing. The opposition has been very careful not to fall into that trap.

We believe, on this side of the House, that when it comes to Canada's position and what we are projecting to the world, it is important that we are clear and definitive. I say with pride that, when we had our study on Ukraine, we as a party joined with other members of Parliament to bring forward a report on Ukraine. One of the things we put forward that was a bit different from the other parties—and we were the only party to put this forward—was a supplementary report. As the House knows, that is when members of Parliament from other parties decide they will add something to a report.

We were in concert with the recommendations of the report at the time, but we said the NDP believed we need to wait for any proposed trade deal, which the government was looking at with Ukraine, until such time as we can determine that there were free, fair and transparent elections that were accepted by international standards.

Additionally, the release of all political prisoners would have to happen, because this is something we value highly.

We cannot enter into trade agreements with governments that are abusing their power. It is important to be clear about that. We are not saying we do not want to trade; we are saying that if one is going to trade with our country, one has to abide by certain basic democratic principles and human rights. This is something we were clear about when we reported to Parliament about Ukraine prior to our recent debates.

There is another thing I would like to mention. In November, after we saw the government of Ukraine's abuse of power, we issued a statement on November 25, calling on the government to restrain itself and release its political prisoners. We followed that up on December 10 with the debate we had here and we put out a statement asking for the same thing. On January 17, we condemned the repressive use of violence by the government of Ukraine. I sent a letter to Minister Baird on January 21, as I mentioned, asking him to consider some of the actions I have just mentioned.

Mr. Speaker, I see you are giving me the nod for time—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): No, I just—

Mr. Paul Dewar: I apologize, Mr. Speaker. I should know by now it is the Minister of Foreign Affairs. I cannot call that a rookie mistake.

On January 21, I sent a letter to the Minister of Foreign Affairs asking him to consider action. Then I followed it up, as I mentioned earlier, with a proposal for a motion for unanimous consent.

I am laying all of this out because many say it is not our role to do anything and ask how it is the business of Canada to be telling the government of Ukraine how to conduct its affairs. We have to abide by the sovereignty of other governments, but, make no mistake, this is about what to do when there are problems and using everything we can to support, in this case, the call of the people of Ukraine to ensure they are going to have fair rules and respect for human rights.

With the government of Ukraine turning away from what were the accepted norms of the people, which is to ensure that there is freedom of speech, that there will not be oppression, and that the state will not use its police to crack down on peaceful demonstrators, we do have a role to play. That is why we speak not just with a critique of the government but about what we can do, because if we learn from history, there is one lesson we can learn when it comes to authoritarian governments. If people turn their backs on the actions of any authoritarian government, it will continue to abuse its power. It has been noted already that the president of Ukraine has already done this. He has received messages from the rest of the world and he has tried to pull back on the draconian laws. He has tried to cut a deal on power-sharing.

If we look at this from a strategic point of view, we see that when we are vigilant, when we assure the Ukrainian people that we are going to be with them and put pressure on the government, it is a sign from the international community to the government of Ukraine that it cannot abuse its power without others noting it. That is why it is important for the Conservative government to work with its allies on this.

I have mentioned before that we are hearing that many of the assets of Yanukovich and others have been spirited out into Europe. That is why diplomacy is absolutely critical. It is not just about individual sanctions that we want to put forward and that hopefully the government will accept; it is also about working with our friends in the EU and the United States. If we work together, we know that more pressure can be applied and that the Ukrainian government will not be able to continue down the path of repression. It will not be able to continue down the path of selling off the resources of the Ukrainian people. It will not be able to go down the path of abusing its power.

There is a documented case of the government claiming that it had the right to go forward with some of the initiatives that I mentioned on the deal with Russia. It claimed that it had a majority vote. On January 16, 2014, when it brought in its sweeping, draconian laws, it was claimed by the government that it had passed these laws through its parliament with a majority.

However, this is what has been documented. The speaker asked for a show of hands and then, within mere seconds, announced that these draconian laws had been passed by a vote of 235 in favour, but, as we can do here, they were actually able to freeze a frame of who was in parliament at the time, and there were only 119 Party of Regions MPs in the house who voted in favour. It is that kind of thing, the abuse of power, that we are dealing with.

• (1915)

Let me finish where I started. This is about the dream of the Ukrainian people. When my mother went to Ukraine in 2004 as an observer for our country in the elections there, she came back with stories of people who were finally realizing their dream. She brought me a memento that I will cherish forever—the orange scarf.

It was a time of promise, and the promise must not be forgotten that the Ukrainian people were going to be able to live their dream and have the human rights that we enjoy, the assurance that there would be the basic standards of democracy, freedom of speech, and the ability for people to protest in peace.

Today let us look at what we can do to help the people of Ukraine so that their dream is not lost and that Canada stands proud in the support of the people of Ukraine.

• (1920)

Mr. Garry Breitkreuz (Yorkton—Melville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to add my voice to the voices that I heard from both sides of the aisle here. I appreciate the opposition supporting us in this regard. I would also like to thank our Prime Minister for the strong stand he has taken in regard to this issue, and I thank our Minister of Foreign Affairs as well.

I represent the region of Yorkton—Melville, which has a high percentage of people of Ukrainian ethnic descent who came here decades ago, and some more recently. They have expressed to me their concern, and I am here today to pass that on to all those present and those listening. They realize the importance of freedom and the expression of that freedom through democracy.

I appreciate very much that this matter has been brought forward here today and I want to thank the member opposite for his remarks.

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My question for the member is this: how important is it that Canada stand by nations in which their people are being oppressed? Is it important that we oppose governments that abuse their power?

My constituents have expressed great concern in this regard, and I am wondering if the member feels the same.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Speaker, absolutely we share the concern.

It is important to put forward very concrete measures that we can ask the government to adopt, which is why the targeted sanctions are important. We are saying that if one is going to have good relations with Canada, there are certain standards one has to abide by. When we see countries that are not following those standards, as was mentioned, we need to speak up, speak out, and act.

I obviously share the member's sentiment that this is about our relationship with the world, which is based on the norms that we share. When governments are offside on that, we have to be clear and declarative, which is why we have to put actions forward.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his always interesting remarks. I would like to go back to one of his comments that it is not enough to be opposed, to stand up and say that we are not happy; we must also act.

I would also like to go back to the issue of targeted sanctions. Of course we have an international co-operation program, including in Ukraine, which is very important. It is one of our countries of focus. Some might be inclined to say that we could cut the assistance program or do something else. I am not suggesting cutting the assistance program. I would just like my colleague to tell us more about the concept of targeted sanctions.

[*English*]

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for the question, because it really is about ensuring that we are going to focus our sanctions on the people responsible for the repression. To do that, the government has the ability to impose the Special Economic Measures Act—which, by the way, was brought in by Prime Minister Mulroney—to be able to take very specific sanctions and tailor them to the situation at the time.

Right now we have reports of government officials who are taking money out of the country and depositing and investing it in other parts of the world. What we are hearing is that most of that money is being invested in Europe.

We want to make sure that the message is clear that we are going to focus here in Canada to make sure we do not have these investments and that we will put sanctions on anyone trying to invest in that way here. This is why it is important to act. As they say, speeches are great but actions are better, and that is what we want to see.

• (1925)

Hon. Ron Cannan (Kelowna—Lake Country, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I too would like to voice my opposition to the actions of the Ukrainian government in treating its people with a lack of respect for human rights and human dignity.

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This is a very high priority for our government. I thank the Prime Minister for all of us for allowing this debate to take place, because I believe this is a non-partisan issue.

More than 1.2 million Ukrainians came here. My Baba came from Ukraine. Both my mother-in-law and father-in-law have a Ukrainian background. We just had a great Malanka festival celebration, a New Year's party, to remember the joy and hope for those who have come from Ukraine to make Canada their home for 2014. However, the sad reality is that the people back in Ukraine are being beaten and tortured and treated like animals. The fact is that its government needs to respect human rights and human dignity.

At the end of the night, would the hon. member agree that consensus should be from all parties in the House that we send a clear message to the government of Ukraine to quit beating up the people of Ukraine and allow Ukrainian folks to be part of Europe if that is their wish?

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Speaker, I share that sense, and one of the things we did today was pass a unanimous consent motion. That was an important message to send. Hopefully we will see a consensus in the House that we have targeted sanctions, that we look at visa bans, that we look at what Canada can do to help resolve the situation there.

While I am on my feet, one of the things we and the government have noted is that Ambassador Bennett has been dispatched to Ukraine. He is our ambassador for religious freedom. One thing we hoped the government would put in place was an institute for democratic development. It promised to do that in the Speech from the Throne a couple of years and did not follow up. This is a great example of what could be done if we had an institute for democratic development. It is not just the monitoring of elections; that is very important, but it is also to help with democratic development in between elections.

I hope the government takes a look at that idea again, because if we had the capacity of a democratic development institute in this situation, it would have already been helping on the ground to resolve things, to show how a multi-party system works, and to provide strength to the people of Ukraine.

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his words on this very important issue. I know that his party and my party agree on the need for targeted personal sanctions against Yanukovich and his entourage. We brought this up in December through the member for Wascana, who also brought up in question period today two other possibilities. One, which I know the member for Ottawa Centre is familiar with, has to do with expedited visas, and the other has to do with observers. I wonder if he could share with us some of his thoughts on those ideas.

Mr. Paul Dewar: Mr. Speaker, as I enumerated in my comments, we would like to see that happen. We would like to see support for the Ukrainian people through the provision of safe passage, if need be, and we would like to see an assurance to the Ukrainian people that if they need support and help, they have it here. One of the ways to do that is to provide expedited visas for people to come here if need be.

The other is to have people on the ground. That is why I mentioned that if we did have the democratic development institute that I referred to, we would already have people there. Clearly if we can negotiate somehow to get people on the ground to help document what is happening, we should do it. It is one of the things I mentioned that we had put forward in concert with the suggestions by the Ukrainian-Canadian community and the Ukrainian Canadian Congress. It put forward a very sensible package of recommendations, including the ones my colleague just mentioned. Absolutely we should do that, including those visa bans that I mentioned.

• (1930)

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with my colleague, the member for Toronto Centre.

I am very glad that we are holding this important debate on the ongoing crisis in Ukraine, and I am privileged to have an opportunity to speak to it.

This issue is of great interest to Canadians, particularly the 1.2 million Canadians who can trace their roots back to Ukraine. Canada has the third largest population of Ukrainians in the world, behind Ukraine itself and Russia. They arrived primarily in three large waves between 1891 and 1952, in each case escaping chaos, war, and repression in their homeland and seeking freedom in Canada.

They have made immense contributions to our country, and these contributions continue to this day. While they are now well established as a community in Canada, many Ukrainian Canadians still maintain links with families and friends back in Ukraine and maintain a keen interest in the fate of their families.

Over the course of my remarks, I will argue that it is not only Ukrainian Canadians who have a stake in the crisis under way, but all of us. First, though, let me summarize the major events that have led us to where we are today.

The genesis of the current crisis, of course, can be traced back to November 21, 2013, when President Yanukovich suddenly and abruptly announced that he was walking away from an agreement, six years in the making, for closer economic and political ties with the EU, the same kind of agreements that other eastern European countries, such as Poland and the Baltic States, signed as part of their eventual admission into the EU and which are now bearing fruit in the form of more prosperous societies and better opportunities for its citizens.

Ukraine gained independence from the Soviet Union in 1991 and has been moving on a path towards closer integration with the European Union. President Yanukovich's actions broke sharply with that path, prompting an immediate and massive protest movement by ordinary Ukrainians, known, of course, as the Maidan.

For the rest of December and into the new year, vigorous but largely peaceful protests continued in Ukraine. This was met by increased repression by the Yanukovich regime and its Berkut riot police. On December 25, Tetyana Chornovol, a journalist and Euromaidan social activist, was brutally beaten by five assailants. This only reignited the protest movement into more determined opposition to the Yanukovich government.

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On January 16, Yanukovich's party pushed through a series of draconian laws cracking down on the rights of Ukrainians to protest peacefully. The laws are too exhaustive to summarize, but I will include a few penalties, such as up to two years in jail for defamation of government officials, up to six years imprisonment for blocking access to someone's residence, up to three years in jail for distribution of extremist materials, and exemption from punishment for police who commit crimes against protestors.

Again, these harsh measures only made matters worse. In the last week, we have seen the first deaths of protestors by police, the spreading of the Euromaidan protests to more cities in Ukraine, and the occupation of several government buildings.

The crisis has reached the point where, as my colleague from Toronto Centre has put it, it will only end with severe repression or a total climb-down by the regime.

Over the weekend, Yanukovich gave signs of attempting such a climb-down. He offered senior positions in the government to two of the opposition leaders and floated offers to review some of the anti-democratic laws passed January 16. He revisited a recent constitutional change that gave his office of the presidency greater power, and he included more opposition members in the body overseeing elections and tasked with preventing election fraud.

We are at a critical moment in the history of Ukraine. What, if anything, can Canada do? What should we do?

Let me begin by stating the position of my party. We condemn the state-sanctioned violence against protestors. This is utterly unacceptable and should stop immediately. Those who have perpetrated violence must also be held to account.

• (1935)

The Ukrainian government must immediately repeal the anti-democratic laws adopted on January 16 and allow the Ukrainian people the right to assemble and speak freely and peacefully. They are now talking about it, but earlier today, they also talked about the possibility of imposing martial law, so we really do need to see some concrete results.

President Yanukovich must enter into real negotiations with opposition forces, not with ultimatums or unilateral offers, in order to de-escalate the situation and restore Ukraine's democratic path. Canada, for its part, should work closely with like-minded allies to bring real pressure on President Yanukovich and his political backers. Our government so far has offered that all options are on the table. While this statement is fine as far as it goes, we are at the point where we need to be more explicit.

When we last debated this situation on December 10, my hon. colleague from Wascana stressed on several occasions that Canada needs to move its position from rhetoric to concrete action. That was six weeks ago. Condemnations are fine but are not likely to contribute to real change in the long term.

What action might Canada take? Measures should include the Prime Minister directly contacting President Yanukovich. Efforts must be made by Canada to get the U.S. and European countries to join in taking concrete steps to pressure Yanukovich into making changes.

There should be a push by Canada and its allies to set up talks between the Yanukovich government and opposition leaders; a demand to send observers, as we have done in the past; and the imposition of personal targeted sanctions against President Yanukovich and his political backers, both within and outside government, such as freezing personal assets and imposing travel restrictions.

As Liberals have long been calling for, the government has indicated that it is working with our allies to bring diplomatic pressure and coordinated action against the Yanukovich regime. Action is good, and we hope this consultation bears fruit soon. Joint action by Canada, the U.S., and the E.U. will be much more powerful than unilateral action on our part. However, in the event that our allies are unable to agree on coordinated action, Canada should be prepared to lead all the way. The example Canada would set might be important and would influence our allies to follow our lead.

Canada has a tradition of fighting for what is right: banning land mines; fighting apartheid in South Africa, including the imposition of sanctions; sending our peacekeepers into far-flung theatres such as the Balkans, Rwanda, Cyprus, and the Middle East to try to keep warring parties apart and save innocent lives; and crucial diplomatic interventions, going all the way back to Lester Pearson in diffusing the Suez crisis. Further than that, I would argue that we have an important stake in what happens in Ukraine, even though it requires us to think in a more long-term, strategic way.

The world is watching, in particular former countries of the Soviet Union, to see if Ukraine can continue to entrench democracy. My own colleague, the member for Toronto Centre, has described a competition between what could be viewed as democratic capitalism in the west and a more autocratic state-led capitalism in Russia.

While we are not back in the Cold War, and today's Russia is not the U.S.S.R. of the past, there is, however, a real competition of ideas, values, and systems at play. The rest of the world is taking note and is trying to determine which path leads to success.

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Ukrainian protestors of Euromaidan can also teach us something about ourselves. They are not starry-eyed idealists. They understand that closer integration with the EU is not a complete panacea. In fact, it is likely to have some short-term pain. Ukrainians, though, especially the young people, understand that long-term economic success lies with the rule of law and institutions with free and democratic societies. They have seen the progress of their counterparts in Poland and the Balkan states. They see the wealth of the E. U. as a whole, despite its challenges. Most of all, however, they see the crucial importance of a country being able to determine its future democratically and with the rights and freedoms all humans deserve. They remind us of how valuable what we have here in Canada is, and it is important for us to remember this and be prepared to stand up for it.

● (1940)

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the critic for foreign affairs from the Liberal Party for his intervention. I appreciated his support earlier today for the motion passed unanimously in the House condemning the violence in Ukraine.

He mentioned the young people and that they are a special generation. This generation has actually grown up outside the sphere of either a Soviet Union or a Russian czar. They had the true experience of growing up in a democratic country. I know that there are many watching here in the Chamber tonight. There are also those who have worked on the Hill as parliamentary interns through the Canada-Ukraine parliamentary program. So many of us have engaged with these bright, hard-working individuals who have such a hope and a dream of a free and independent Ukraine. I would ask if my friend from the Liberal Party could speak to those individuals who are watching and allow them to know that all of us here in Canada stand with them.

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his comment. He is right. There is a whole new generation, because Ukraine began on its path to democracy in 1991. That was over 20 years ago today. They have grown up in a different world, far different from that which I watched from afar as a young person during the period of the Cold War. They have also now been exposed to many other parts of the world outside the traditional sphere that existed when it was the Soviet Union. They also are very sensitive and want the freedom, the right, and the liberty to control their own lives and make decisions about the direction they want their country to go.

We in Canada, who have always been champions of democracy, a Canada that has a Charter of Rights and Freedoms, must show this new young generation that we are with them and will support them to make sure that their aspirations are going to be realized in the years to come. They must feel our support.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in its 2008 Speech from the Throne, the government made a commitment to create an agency to promote democracy. In light of the current situation, I think that would have been very useful for the transition toward democracy.

Could my colleague talk about this initiative, which I think could be a very useful and significant Canadian contribution to democracy around the world?

Mr. Marc Garneau: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her comments. We are all familiar with the decision the government made a few years ago. What it did was regrettable.

Let me turn to the issue we are concerned with today, the situation in Ukraine, and the fact that its current government may bring the country back into the orbit it wanted to leave a long time ago. In fact, it left that orbit to turn toward democracy. It must be said that democracy has been taking root in the country for 20 years.

It is not complicated. Canada's role is to protect democracy around the world and it must do its part. Canada must send a clear message to Ukraine that the actions of the Yanukovich government are unacceptable. We are here to support Ukrainians and to condemn the recent anti-democratic initiatives. They are not hard to understand in this case.

● (1945)

[*English*]

Ms. Chrystia Freeland (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as a Ukrainian Canadian on her first day in Parliament, it is both an honour and a tragedy to be speaking to the House about the tragic and brutal events in Ukraine.

My mother was born in a refugee camp. Her parents, together with her and her three sisters, were grateful and delighted to find refuge here in Canada, like so many other Ukrainian Canadians. It left such an imprint of gratitude and delight in Canada and all it offered that my grandfather would not permit any criticism of any Canadian government at his table, no matter which party was in power. I am afraid that in my new career, I am not going to be able to perfectly follow my grandfather's instruction.

What I would like to talk about is what is happening in Ukraine and why the stakes are so high for Ukrainians, for Canadians and for the world. As my colleague has just described, the struggle right now in Ukraine began over a European association agreement. Who knew that ordinary people could be so moved by trade treaties?

What it has become is a fight about democracy or dictatorship. The fact that this is what is at stake in Ukraine became very clear last week, when President Yanukovich tried, illegitimately, to ram a series of laws through parliament that would have severely restricted the rights of association, the rights of freedom of speech, the rights of assembly and, indeed, the rights of religious organizations, including the Ukrainian Catholic Church.

Ukrainians understand that this is the fight about that democracy that they have been working very hard to build, with a lot of setbacks, over the past 20 years. We should be inspired; I am inspired by what is happening right now in Ukraine. All of us as elected officials know about the cynicism we sometimes encounter from voters.

Imagine being Ukrainian and having gone through the Orange Revolution. It was not so long ago in 2004 and 2005. Ukrainians thought that they had won; they thought that they had really built democracy. It ultimately went so badly that they elected Yanukovich. Yet still today they have faith in democracy. They have such faith in the action of people and their ability to make change that they are out there in the streets, risking their lives.

What happens in Ukraine matters to the world, and particularly, as my hon. colleague described, in the neighbourhood where Ukraine finds itself, in the former Soviet Union and the former Warsaw Pact countries. These are parts of the world where the hold of democracy is tenuous. History did not end in 1991, despite Francis Fukuyama's prediction that it would. Right now, everyone in that part of the world is watching Ukraine very closely to see what the outcome will be, and to see if people like us, democratically elected officials in democracies, will not only talk the talk but walk the walk, and whether we believe in democracy enough to support it when it is at risk.

This is a tremendously important opportunity for Canada to be heard in the world. As we have heard so eloquently this evening, many of us represent communities with strong Ukrainian Canadian representation. Ukrainians are an important people and community in Canada, and Canada has an important voice in Ukraine. That was made manifest most powerfully by a Conservative government in 1991, when Canada and Poland were the first two countries to recognize Ukrainian independence.

Ukraine listens to us and the world listens to what we do and what we say about Ukraine. This is an opportunity, as my hon. colleague suggested, for us to do what Lester B. Pearson taught us, which is to punch above our weight in international affairs, by taking the lead on Ukraine.

● (1950)

It is really clear what we can do. It is wonderful for me as a Ukrainian Canadian to hear so much anguish, worry and sympathy for the people of Ukraine, but now is the time to act. There are three very clear things for us to do. The first is targeted sanctions against President Yanukovich and his allies in government. That will have an impact. Indeed, one of the jokes that people tell in the former Soviet Union now is that their dictators want to rule like Stalin but live like Abramovich. That is what globalization allows nowadays, that one can be a dictator at home but have a villa on Cap Ferrat. We cannot allow that to happen and must say that they cannot have it both ways.

The second thing that we have to do is to provide expedited visas for the people who have put their lives at risk on the Euromaidan. Again, this would be a very important symbolic statement that we are with them.

Third, we have to send high-level observers. Sunlight is the best disinfectant, and if we are watching, I can assure everyone there will be less brutality.

I hope I will be permitted, since this is my first statement in the House and we are talking about Ukraine, to share one of the slogans of the Euromaidan.

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[Member spoke Ukrainian and provided the following translation:]

The people united cannot be defeated.

[English]

That is true today in Ukraine if we unite with them and actually act. As a Ukrainian Canadian and a proud member of Canada's Parliament, the words of support are terrific, but now let us do something.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very honoured to put my first question in this debate to the hon. member on her first day in Parliament.

I listened very carefully to her speech and other speeches in the House. We talk about sanctions and I have mentioned on occasion in Parliament that I was born and raised in Poland. My past was in the Solidarity movement that eventually brought freedom and the collapse of communism. I remember the sanctions of 1981 after the introduction of martial law in Poland. There were sanctions by different countries, including the United States of America and some European countries. I remember a government spokesman speaking after that. Some of the sanctions limited food supplies coming to Poland and he said that there would be enough food for the government.

Therefore, my question to the hon. member is this. How should different governments act in imposing sanctions that will not affect the people of Ukraine but affect the oligarchs in the government?

Ms. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the question, which reflects a deeply lived experience of events similar to those in Ukraine.

If I may, I would like to answer as I did to my nine-year-old daughter yesterday. We were at a rally for the Euromaidan in Toronto. When we got home, she said, "You are talking about sanctions, but it is going to hurt the people of Ukraine. Isn't that a bad idea?" What I said to her was that these must be directly targeted personal sanctions. In particular, we need to target visa travel, find and freeze the assets in the west, and say that the regime cannot have it both ways. The government cannot be a dictator at home and travel abroad and buy real estate.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to congratulate my colleague on her recent election and thank her for her speech.

One thing I have been thinking about during this whole debate and the tragedy that is happening is that Ukrainians are under the shadow of a very powerful Russia, which is attempting to dictate policy. We have a similar but not analogous situation. We live in the shadow of the United States and have been able to navigate Big Brother somehow and chart our independence. What can we offer our brothers and sisters in Ukraine to help them somehow live with the shadow of Russia but maintain their independent path?

● (1955)

Ms. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for the excellent question. That similarity in position might well be why Ukrainians find themselves so much at home in Canada.

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There is a saying in about politicians in Ukraine that they do not need umbrellas because they need to know how to walk between the raindrops as they navigate their way between Russia and the west. I think President Yanukovich was caught in this dilemma and he did indeed face tremendous pressure in the decision he made in the fall.

Right now, though, I do not think it is a question of subtlety. I think that President Yanukovich has attempted to restrict very severely the democratic freedoms that Ukrainians have enjoyed for 20 years. At this point, his big decision is what he should do with his people in Ukraine.

I hope that the Canadian observers we have been talking about can play an essential role. There is a need right now for mediators between the opposition and the government. Canadians could be trusted interlocutors, and I hope we will send a high-level delegation there soon.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very honoured to take part in this debate. I did participate in the debate we had not that long ago. Unfortunately, the situation in Ukraine is not improving.

To start, I would like to make a few comments on the evolution of the situation in Ukraine. It is being followed with increasing concern by participating states in the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, OSCE, which includes Canada and Ukraine. Even more so, we recall that Ukraine held the OSCE chairmanship in 2013 and hosted the 20th ministerial council in early December as events unfolded outside in the streets of Kiev.

When Ukraine took over the chairmanship in 2013, Canada spelled out very clearly its expectations for Ukraine to lead by example. This meant fully implementing its OSCE commitments, particularly those related to the protection and promotion of human rights, democratization and rule of law.

As Ukraine's OSCE chairmanship drew to an end and violence continued to escalate, needless to say, Canada was extremely disappointed over Ukraine's failure to listen to its people and find a peaceful resolution to the crisis leading to a free, democratic and prosperous future.

When our Minister of Foreign Affairs travelled to Kiev in December and attended the OSCE's ministerial council, he used it as an opportunity to remind the government of Ukraine that OSCE principles and commitments alone were not enough. He stressed that, as democratic actors, we have all accepted to be held accountable for the implementation of these commitments. The minister capitalized on the multilateral venue of the OSCE to drive home and amplify Canada's unequivocal message of support for the democratic rights of all Ukrainians. With the OSCE chairmanship having been transferred over to Switzerland for 2014, Canada and other like-minded countries have made it clear that the situation in Ukraine will remain a priority in the OSCE context.

Mr. Speaker, I should have mentioned at the beginning of my speech that I would be splitting my time with my colleague, the member for Elmwood—Transcona.

The OSCE was founded nearly 40 years ago to foster dialogue and co-operation on security issues. As the only pan-European security organization that spans the Euro-Atlantic region, the OSCE is

uniquely placed to help resolve the crisis in Ukraine. Peaceful dialogue is at the core of the OSCE's work, and finding common ground through political means is its *raison d'être*. Respect of fundamental rights, such as freedom of assembly, the right to free expression and giving journalists the liberty to do their work, is essential to ensuring cohesive and secure societies.

The 2014 OSCE chairperson in office, Swiss Foreign Minister Didier Burkhalter, has proposed to Ukraine Prime Minister Mykola Azarov that he draw on the OSCE's expertise to facilitate dialogue between the government and opposition and has offered a range of possible activities over the middle and long term, such as election support. Canada, through its mission to the OSCE, has encouraged the Ukrainian authorities to take advantage of the Swiss offer.

Following a request from the committee on human rights, national minorities and inter-ethnic relations of the Ukrainian parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, the OSCE office for democratic institutions and human rights is currently conducting a review of the compatibility of the new laws with Ukraine's OSCE commitments, such as how they relate to public assemblies, among other issues.

● (2000)

The review is expected to be completed by early February. Canada's mission to the OSCE repeatedly called for such a review to be made with the view of repealing any provisions that would be found to be incompatible with the OSCE commitments.

As such, Canada will follow closely how the government of Ukraine responds to this review. Canada will remain strongly engaged at the OSCE in keeping the Ukrainian crisis at the forefront of discussions among the participating states. We have denounced the draconian laws adopted without a proper vote and in violation of parliamentary procedure by the Ukrainian Rada. We have expressed our concerns with the violent clashes and deaths of protesters and called for restraint on all sides. Through our statements at the OSCE, we continue to put pressure on the Ukrainian government to engage without delay in a meaningful dialogue with its citizens to find a peaceful and democratic solution to the crisis.

As the former OSCE chairmanship, Ukraine is fully aware of the assistance the OSCE can provide. Canada joins others who are like-minded in urging Ukraine to take advantage of OSCE tools and instruments to defuse the crisis and pave a way forward.

I would like to add some of my thoughts to my written speech, because it is really very important that we in Canada look very closely at what is happening now in Ukraine. I read recent news and I understand that in the round of talks between President Yanukovich and the opposition, while they say that it was partially successful and that apparently some of these new laws would be withdrawn, the offer of power-sharing was not accepted by the opposition.

The leaders of opposition parties that took part in the talks do not want to be part of a government that oppresses people. I do not think they want to be put in a trap as leaders of their democratic parties, and that includes Arseniy Yatsenyuk who was offered the position of prime minister. That includes Vitali Klitschko who was offered the position of the deputy prime minister.

The reason people are there in the cold at the squares in Kiev and at other cities in Ukraine—because the province is spread out—is that they love their country and they want to have their voice in determining the future of Ukraine.

If Ukrainians sing their national anthem, one of the lines says: [*Member speaks in Ukrainian language*]. It means souls and bodies who lay down for our freedom. It means we love our country so much that we are not afraid to die to make sure our country is free and democratic. Ukrainians were fighting for independence for hundreds of years, and they deserve a free country, they deserve a democratic country and they deserve to be in charge of their own country.

In the words of the national anthem that is not used anymore because it is pre-2003, there is another line that says: [*Member speaks in Ukrainian language*]. It means we will not allow others to rule in our motherland.

● (2005)

Neither Russia nor any other neighbour of Ukraine has the right to tell Ukrainians what to do. We here in this Parliament can join other powers and show Ukrainians in the Maidan and other places a victory sign that they will be successful and we will be supporting them.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his passion and determination to see that we do support the people of Ukraine and, to that end, talk about the need for action.

Clearly the people have taken action. They have done it in a way in which people in the past with democratic beliefs challenged authoritarian regimes: with peaceful modality. Violence against the people of Ukraine is clearly something we all have to be critical of, and also we must say what we would do. To that end, I would like to know if my colleague will join with others who have said they are willing to have targeted sanctions on the individuals who are responsible for these heinous actions.

I would ask the member if he has brought this forward within his own caucus. I know his passion is clear on the issue. My question is: Has he brought this forward to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, as we have on this side, to bring in targeted sanctions to ensure we are going to take action when it comes to the government of Ukraine?

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned before, action is very important. We have to work together with other governments and make sure that whatever measures we bring forward hurt most those who are behind the operation, who are behind President Yanukovich and running the show there, which would include the oligarchs. Whatever we do, we have to make sure it does not hurt the people of Ukraine. Yes, I agree that action taken together with other governments is necessary. We have to help the Ukrainian people.

They are a peaceful people who want to be good neighbours to the people in the north, east and west. They want to work together with Europe and Russia. They will be neighbours with Russia, I hope, for many centuries to come. They want to be good neighbours. However, whatever measures we bring—

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): We only have five minutes for questions and comments. We will try to get as many people in as we can.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North.

● (2010)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have been suggesting that what the government really needs to do is look at targeted sanctions. In fact, the deputy leader of the Liberal Party, back just before we recessed, emphasized that point time and time again.

I have a very good friend, Boris Wrzesnewskyj, who has done a wonderful job in making sure we are kept informed as a caucus in terms of what should be done. Like many Canadians, he has a Facebook account and likes to make suggestions. He reinforces what the Ukrainian Canadian Congress is suggesting, which is targeted sanctions.

Can the member specifically answer if the government supports targeted sanctions? Why is it taking so long to provide a clear answer on that?

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Speaker, I would like to say again that action is necessary. Action by the Government of Canada and European governments is necessary.

If we have learned anything from history, we have learned that inaction can lead to tragic results. Therefore, yes, action is necessary. We should join with other governments to hurt the most those who are behind the oppressive regime of Ukraine.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. Before we resume debate with the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona, I have just a reminder for all hon. members.

There is a great deal of interest in the questions and comments portion this evening. With usually only five minutes available, I think it would be helpful to all members if those who are putting questions would keep their questions to a minute or less, and perhaps in the same way if the member who responds could keep that to less than a minute, then we would get more members participating in that segment of the debate.

Resuming debate with the hon. member for Elmwood—Transcona.

Mr. Lawrence Toet (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I truly do appreciate the opportunity to participate in this debate tonight along with many of my colleagues in the House. As so many of them have indicated tonight, I have also been following the situation in Ukraine very closely over the past number of months. I can say that our government is deeply disappointed with the Ukrainian government's decision to suspend signing of the association agreement and the deep and comprehensive free trade area with the European Union. Like hundreds of thousands of Ukrainian citizens, we believe the decision to not sign the association agreement represents a lost opportunity. We stand with all Ukrainians who are fighting for their beliefs in a democratic European Ukraine, and we believe that Ukraine's best hope for democracy and economic prosperity lies in closer alignment with European and North American norms and institutions.

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More disturbing is the shady way in which the new laws were passed by the Ukrainian parliament on January 16. If they stand, these new laws will place serious limitations on the human rights and civil liberties of Ukrainians.

In particular, we are very concerned about a new measure that would define Ukrainian non-governmental or civil society organizations as “foreign agents” if they receive money or property from foreign countries and participate in any so-called political activities. The new law would require such foreign agents to register with the government and to provide monthly reports on their activities and income. They would also be subject to different tax treatments on these foreign funds. These changes could be a serious hindrance to the economic prosperity of the Ukrainian people and would have a serious impact on Canada's development assistance work in the Ukraine.

As a way of providing some context for this debate, I would like to take a few moments to tell members about Canada's work to help Ukraine achieve economic prosperity. As members know, the historic ties between our two nations extend back through generations of Ukrainian migration to Canada. For more than 120 years, Ukrainian-born Canadians have contributed to the social, economic and political fabric of Canada. Today, Ukrainians make up almost four per cent of the total Canadian population. I know my riding of Elmwood—Transcona is very reflective of this.

Economically, Canada and Ukraine enjoy positive commercial relationships, with two-way trade that totalled \$313.5 million in 2012. Over the years, we have developed a close bilateral relationship, a solid economic partnership, and strong people-to-people ties. In 1991, Canada was the first western nation to recognize Ukraine's independence. Since then, much of our development assistance in Ukraine has focused on increasing economic opportunities for Ukrainians in a strengthened democracy.

Over the years, Canadian development assistance investments in private-sector development and governance in Ukraine have contributed to the country's transition from a centrally planned system toward a free-market democratic model. However, Ukraine was an integral part of the former Soviet Union, and as such its economic transition has been much slower and more difficult. To build resilience and achieve broad-based prosperity, Ukraine must diversify and grow its real economy, especially through developing its small and medium-enterprise sector, which is far smaller than in other European countries. Stimulating the growth of small and medium enterprises will also help to expand and strengthen the middle class. We know from experience that a healthy, civically engaged middle class and small-business sector will help to nurture a well-functioning democracy. Given its rich natural resources, reasonable labour costs and large and well-educated population, Ukraine has excellent economic potential. However, it will face challenges in becoming competitive. If concluded, planned free trade agreements with Europe and Canada will help to provide a road map to greater competitiveness within a predictable rules-based framework.

To increase rates of economic growth in Ukraine, Canada is focusing on three areas of intervention.

The first area is to strengthen the investment climate in a sustainable way by building economic foundations. In practical terms, this means improving the capacity of all levels of government, including local governments, to deliver on the basic needs of citizens and create a supportive framework for local business growth and trade and investment. That means providing security and a level playing field for small and medium enterprises, from fair and transparent regulations, to independent and predictable application of the rule of law.

• (2015)

The second area of focus is growing businesses, especially those that are micro, small, and medium-sized firms, including those in the agricultural sector. Our goal is to help make these businesses more sustainable and competitive. We would do this by helping entrepreneurs access the things we take for granted in Canada, such as business networks, value chains, productivity-enhancing technology, insurance and business financing.

The third area of focus, and one I believe in strongly for a number of reasons, is investing in people, especially women and youth. Our objective is to build a skilled, trained workforce of women and men who can seize opportunities in a rapidly expanding labour market that is fuelled by the needs of local and international employers.

Careful investment of development assistance in these areas will lead to increased employment opportunities and enhanced business productivity and profitability in Ukraine, resulting in rising household incomes and reduced poverty over the long term.

This is also in Canada's interest. As Ukraine's economy continues to grow, so will the economic ties between our two countries. Canada's development program has contributed significantly to advancing Ukraine's sustainable economic growth. Agriculture is a key growth sector for the Ukraine.

Canadian support has helped to increase the competitiveness of smallholder fruit, vegetable, and dairy farmers who have invested in improved technology and are working together to market higher-value, higher-quality products demanded by the marketplace.

With help from Canada and specialized technical assistance from Israel, smallholder horticulture farmers in southern Ukraine have sold more than 12,000 tons of produce, for over \$12 million. Most importantly, they have increased their household income by over 30% since the start of this project.

Agricultural insurance is an essential component of a modern agricultural economy. It allows farmers to invest with confidence and for banks to lend to farmers with confidence. With support from Canada, Ukraine has implemented a new agricultural insurance system based on international best practices. At the start of 2013, seven Ukrainian insurance companies were selling the 14 products developed by this project, resulting in more than 1,000 insurance contracts covering a total of 1.929 million hectares of crop. The crop area that is covered expands every day.

Canada is also helping to create partnerships between Canadian and Ukrainian cities to help them modernize their approach to local economic development planning. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has worked with municipal partners in 12 cities to develop and implement municipal strategic development plans. These plans have helped to operationalize 15 demonstration projects, in tourism development, city branding and marketing, and business centre creation.

As part of the implementation of the cities' strategic plans, an additional 45 local economic development projects were launched. Cities were able to attract \$80 million in investments from private and donor sectors, thanks to a training program for city officials on how to promote cities' competitive advantages.

We are working to improve the planning and delivery of services that support economic growth at the municipal level. We have also helped government institutions at the regional level to formulate and implement reform-oriented policies that are in the public interest and adhere to international best practices. We are assisting with the development of a national demand-driven vocational skills training systems across the country.

Each of these initiatives will help to increase broad-based economic growth in Ukraine. We are doing these things because we believe in Ukraine and its people.

As I mentioned earlier, we are very concerned that our partners not be deemed foreign agents. That would subject them to an additional taxation and reporting burden, limiting their ability to achieve meaningful results for the Ukrainian people. It may even force some of them to close their shops.

We have strong historic ties with Ukraine. We have forged strong alliances out of a shared understanding of Ukraine's unique challenges, as well as a common desire to see the country overcome them.

We look forward to continuing with that work and to helping Ukraine and Ukrainians achieve the freedom and prosperity they not only yearn for but that they deserve. We remain hopeful that the current crisis will come to a peaceful settlement and that Ukraine will begin to get its economy back on track.

● (2020)

In summary, Canada is deeply concerned about the deterioration of democracy and rule of law in Ukraine. Canada remains committed to helping Ukraine by working to improve economic opportunities for Ukrainians in a strengthened democracy.

Canadian assistance is also focused on facilitative judicial and civil service reforms. Canada's support for small and medium enterprise growth is helping to develop a middle class in the Ukraine, which is essential for ensuring a sustainable democratic transition. We are monitoring the situation very closely and will continue to deliver assistance as appropriate. Canada will continue to stand by Ukrainians who are expressing their concern with the recent direction their government has undertaken.

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in 2012 the foreign affairs committee did a study on Ukraine. As I mentioned in my speech, we determined as a party to do a supplementary report

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stating that until such time as we saw a change in the governance in the Ukraine and the concerns we all had, we should not be involved in free trade investment with the Ukraine.

I want to get a response from my colleague on this. Would the member favour free trade and investment with the present Yanukovich government?

Mr. Lawrence Toet: Mr. Speaker, at this time we would not see that government as one we would want to negotiate with. It is going through a process with the people in its country. That is where our focus would be today. We want to be supportive of the people of the Ukraine. We want to make sure that the people of the Ukraine are not affected. That is why I brought up the economic supports we have been giving to the people of the Ukraine over the years. We want to make sure that the economic growth in the Ukraine continues and that we do not see the people suffering.

We have heard about sanctions from many of the members tonight. We want to make sure that any sanctions brought forward are very targeted and done in a cohesive manner. We do not want a situation where some of the great progress that has been made over the years is set back by having sanctions that would affect the people of Ukraine. That is very important to us as a government.

● (2025)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is no doubt that in Canada there are literally tens of thousands of people from coast to coast to coast who are following what is happening in the Ukraine with a great deal of concern. We have seen that in terms of some of the events. The member for Elmwood—Transcona and I were at a rally at the Manitoba legislature. People came out in freezing cold weather and strong winds to express their concern and wanting to see something done. This type of action is taking place all over our country.

My question is fairly specific. When does the member believe we will see some of those targeted sanctions from the government, given that Canada could play a very strong leadership role throughout the world by coming out with strong targeted sanctions?

Mr. Lawrence Toet: Mr. Speaker, I remember standing outside with my colleague from Winnipeg North and so many of our friends from the Ukraine on that Friday in Winnipeg. It was a very cold night. That underlined to us how important the show of support was to the people there.

As a government, we will continue to go forward. It is important that whatever we do is done in a very cohesive fashion. It is important that we do not go forward arbitrarily but continue to work with our allies across Europe and the United States to make sure that what we do bring forward is targeted.

We have already seen some of that happen today. We saw that the government of the Ukraine is starting to understand that the world is not only watching but getting ready to act. The government is starting to move back on some of the things it has done. We have some indication of movement. I believe that movement is because it knows the world is prepared to act. As the Canadian government, we are very close to preparing to act.

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Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, all of us have attended these rallies when it was exceptionally cold. That speaks to the dedication and resolve of not only the people in the Maidan, but the people of the Ukrainian-Canadian diaspora, who are willing to endure anything to make sure that order, peace, democracy, good governance and opportunity is restored to Ukraine. Our government, from the Prime Minister on down, is heavily engaged in examining all options.

I would ask the hon. member this. Given the context of the member's remarks, what benefit does he believe farmers and producers in the Ukraine would realize from a closer integration with the European Union?

Mr. Lawrence Toet: Mr. Speaker, I think we are already seeing it. In my speech, I referred to the fact that we have a small group of farmers who already, with the help they are getting, have had their incomes increased by over 30%. We are just at the beginning stage. This is a program that started just a year ago.

I think there is great opportunity for growth. We want to continue to see that happen. As a government, we will continue to foster those relationships and to foster those groups that are helping there to grow the economy, especially in the agricultural sector.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the member for Parkdale—High Park, I am very lucky and privileged to represent a community in which many members of the Ukrainian diaspora reside. It is a community that has demonstrated repeatedly its commitment to democracy and human rights and to building a better Canadian society. It also a community that has shown its commitment to its homeland in Ukraine. It is a community that never forgot its roots. We are so proud to have seen so many young people who, even though born here in Canada, have learned the Ukrainian language, Ukrainian culture, and Ukrainian customs and are very active in the community.

I saw most poignantly, during the so-called Orange Revolution a decade ago when a record number of members of this diaspora returned to the Ukraine. Members of the Ukrainian-Canadian diaspora from across the country returned to Ukraine to ensure fair and free elections during that time. It resulted, actually, in a change in outcome in the election in 2004 so that fraudulent elections were overturned and a more genuine result was the outcome.

I was inspired, at that time, to work with so many members of the diaspora and to learn about their commitment to democracy, human rights, and the rule of law here and in Ukraine.

I should have started off, Mr. Speaker, by saying that I am splitting my time with the member for Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, who will be speaking after me.

This commitment to democracy was demonstrated, in fact, just today, when a member of our community, a young man who is studying here at Carleton University, Oleh Reive, came to Parliament Hill because he felt so passionately about what was happening in Ukraine. He was standing on Parliament Hill. He had a Ukrainian flag, the yellow and blue, and a Canadian flag. He was standing in the bitter, freezing cold waving this flag, calling for the Parliament of Canada to recognize sanctions against those who would submit to tyranny, those who would, in fact, try to impose tyranny on the

people of Ukraine. It was very moving to see this young man out there in the bitter cold who felt so passionately about this cause.

I have to say, yesterday, I was at City Hall, in Toronto. We were joined by hundreds of members of the Ukrainian-Canadian diaspora who were demonstrating, again, in very bitter, cold conditions. It was snowing. It was very blustery, but they were there. They were determined to express their view that Canada has to take action, that the time for words, the time for just expressing our outrage and our sentiment that something has to change, is over. Canada has to act. Canada has to be a leader. We have to actually take action.

At that rally, I was proud to stand on the stage at City Hall and refer to the words of my colleague, the official opposition critic for foreign affairs, and express what he had called for, which is that Canada act, that we actually target not the Ukrainian people in general but those responsible, those who are trying to take Ukraine back into the tyranny of the past, and that we impose sanctions on them and their families. We should impose sanctions for travel and sanctions on their funds.

● (2030)

We should not allow Canada to be a travel or tax and money laundering haven for that community. Those responsible should be held to account. This is something that met with incredible popular support among those who were gathered.

People do not want to slip back into the past. Ukrainians are proud of what they have achieved. They want to move forward to what I think they would call a “normal” democracy, where there is respect for the rule of law and human rights, where opposition leaders are not thrown in jail, and where protestors are not shot or imprisoned. They want a future where Ukrainians can live a normal life. Many Ukrainians, I dare say most, were expecting that a trade agreement with the European Union would be symbolic of that democratic future for Ukraine. Those hopes were dashed. That is what sparked the Maidan protests we are seeing today.

I want to salute the heroes of the Maidan, those who have been out there day after day in the bitter cold; those who have lost their freedom, who have disappeared, who are in jail; those who have been injured; and those who have been killed during this situation. Those martyrs deserve our respect and our unquestioning admiration.

Their struggle should not be in vain. What we need to see as an outcome is for Ukraine to move forward. This needs to be an expression of the will of the Ukrainian people for a normal democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law, and the ability of all people to achieve their full potential. That is what Ukrainians want. That is what we hear our communities here in Canada expressing.

I cannot say enough how strongly the people I represent in Parkdale—High Park feel about this. I have joined them in many demonstrations calling for action from the Conservative government to impress upon Ukraine, in the strongest possible terms, the need for immediate action. We cannot wait any longer. Clearly the government is turning its back on the will of the people.

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We have to react. Those who are taking Ukraine down the path of tyranny have to be held accountable. Their family members have suddenly overnight become billionaires. How does that happen? They have to be held accountable. They have to be held accountable in terms of the monies they have accumulated and in terms of their ability to travel freely throughout the world. That must not continue.

We owe a debt of gratitude to those who are standing up for human rights and democracy in the Maidan. They are the Euromaidan martyrs and heroes. We have to show that we are with them. That comes not only from words but from action.

My community is counting on the House and Parliament to take action. I am calling on my colleagues. I am so glad to see them here this evening. Let us stand together. Let us stay strong. Let us call on the government to act strongly in defence of those who are standing in the bitter cold in defence of democracy. The time to act is now.

• (2035)

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for her speech tonight and for her comments at the rally in support of the Maidan protesters and martyrs yesterday in Toronto. I had the opportunity to participate with her.

She mentioned the NDP critic for foreign affairs earlier and some of the comments he has made. I understand that when Canada's Minister of Foreign Affairs was in Kiev in early December, he went to Maidan and stood in solidarity with those protesters. I understand that the member for Ottawa Centre said, "Joining a protest signals that you are on one side". He criticized the minister for doing that.

I wonder if the member could explain exactly what her colleague meant by those comments.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Speaker, I remember vividly being in Maidan in 2004 during the Orange Revolution. I was there as an election observer. After returning from Zaporizhia, I joined folks in the square, and I could not help but be caught up by the spirit of optimism and hope people were expressing at that point. That hope has been challenged in recent years. It has been challenged by subsequent elections.

I have gone back as an election observer twice since then. That hope has been challenged by subsequent events. We do not want Ukrainians to give up hope that they can achieve democracy. We need to support that desire for democracy. I firmly believe that those who are protesting are doing so because they want democracy, and that is surely what all of us here in the House desire.

I thank my colleague for also being at the demonstration yesterday and at other demonstrations in support of Ukraine. We are united in our goal. What we need to be is united in our action, and I hope we can come together tonight on that.

• (2040)

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, tonight no one in the House is questioning the resolve of all Ukrainians who desire peace and democracy in the Ukraine and of those of the Ukrainian diaspora here in Canada who seek the same. There is one thing everyone is questioning, including the Ukrainian diaspora here in Canada, and that is the resolve of the Conservative government, which my colleague made reference to in her comments.

Today, and actually since last December, the member for Wascana has been calling for unilateral action to send official observers to scrutinize what is going on, for providing expedited visas to victims who need to leave that country for their safety, and for targeting Yanukovich and his crowd with personal sanctions, asset freezes, and travel bans, for example, to push them to stop their anti-democratic behaviour.

Does the member for Parkdale—High Park agree that Canada should take unilateral action in pursuing these three goals to bring some solution and to show the resolve that Canada should have?

Ms. Peggy Nash: In a word, Mr. Speaker, yes. That is what our critic for foreign affairs called for last week, which I was proud to report on at the rally yesterday in Toronto.

Yes, Canada has a special role to play because of our unique relationship with Ukraine. The number of Ukrainian Canadians is quite large. Canada has played a special role in terms of being the first country to recognize Ukraine as an independent country. A number of election observers, including some of us in this Chamber, have helped to preserve democracy in Ukraine. Canada has a special role.

Yes, we have called for Yanukovich and his family to be held to account with targeted sanctions and for assisting those who are being persecuted and may need special assistance to leave that country to come to Canada. The New Democratic Party has already called for this. Our foreign affairs critic has been out in front of other parties in calling for this.

I hope tonight, with this debate, that we can all come together and say that this makes sense. Canada does have a special role to play. Let us work together. Let us get past just calling for it. Let us make it happen.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very honoured to rise today for this emergency debate on Ukraine.

I know that earlier today, during question period, my leader thanked the Speaker for operating this House so effectively and wished him and the clerk a happy new year. The same should also be said to the interpreters, who also ensure the House operates effectively. They make sure we understand each other here. I would like to wish the House interpreters a happy New Year.

I said earlier that I was honoured to rise on this matter because I worked for the United Nations for over 23 years and I took part in various international trials. I negotiated and participated in multi-lateral negotiations involving a number of documents, the best known being the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, adopted by the General Assembly in 1987.

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I mention this because, in the entire time I spent at the United Nations, I saw that the most important thing is international co-operation. It is an obligation of United Nations member states. In fact, it is set out in the first few articles of the United Nations charter. Therefore, that co-operation is essential for the effective operation of the world.

In that sense, I saw just how important international co-operation is in all the debates we will have today, tomorrow and in the ones we have had in the past. It is very important to remember that international co-operation is rather essential to the effective operation of inter-country relations.

I would be remiss if I were to forget the importance of the Ukrainian community's contribution to Canada. I know that, in general, the Ukrainian community has made a very important contribution to our economic development, particularly in mining development in a number of regions, especially mine. My riding of Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou is large, but the Abitibi region is home to a large Ukrainian community, and I would like to take advantage of this debate to say hello to them.

From the outset, one of the things we need to emphasize in this debate—as I mentioned earlier—is the special relationship Canada has with Ukraine. We need to make the most of it. Indeed, if we can make the most of that relationship with Ukraine, we can play an important role, an effective role and a positive role. We could even play a decisive role in this debate, if we make the most of our relationship with Ukraine. That is what matters in all of this.

It is always important to remember the major responsibilities of members of the United Nations. The purposes and principles are outlined in article 1 of the Charter of the United Nations. I would like to quote paragraph 3 of article 1, to remind the members of this Parliament of the purpose of the United Nations:

● (2045)

3. To achieve international co-operation in solving international problems of an economic, social, cultural, or humanitarian character, and in promoting and encouraging respect for human rights and for fundamental freedoms for all....

I think this first article of the United Nations charter is important, and member states need to remember this every time there is a crisis, like the one happening in Ukraine right now. It is important to remind our friends that we have this responsibility, this objective set out by the UN charter. We tend to forget this.

For many years, I took part in international debates at the United Nations, and we often talked about the rule of law, human rights and democracy. All three of these principles are absolutely essential in international debate—again, the rule of law, human rights and democracy are equally essential. It is also crucial to remember that these three principles are interrelated. They cannot be separated in international law. It is important to remember that.

As for the human rights situation in the current crisis in Ukraine, it is important to repeat that we still have concerns in that regard, since we have been talking about this for some time now. Various international mechanisms within the United Nations have highlighted those concerns in various reports.

Earlier, while listening closely to the debate, I was looking at a report published by the Human Rights Council on February 9, 2009,

about arbitrary detention in Ukraine, as well as a report by a special rapporteur, published in 2008, on freedom of opinion and freedom of expression in Ukraine.

These are just two examples of reports on human rights violations in the Ukraine, which is exactly what is happening during this crisis. It is important to remember that this is not a new issue.

It is also important to remember that United Nations member states have obligations, which are an essential part of our role in international co-operation.

I would just like to mention the words of José Manuel Barroso, president of the European Commission, who said that the European Union has the right and the duty to stand by the people of Ukraine at this very difficult time, because they are giving to Europe one of the greatest contributions that can be given. Those young people in the streets of Ukraine, with freezing temperatures, are writing the new narrative for Europe.

I would like to end with something my colleague for Ottawa Centre mentioned earlier. Our party submitted a supplementary report as part of a study on Canada-Ukraine relations.

That report underscores the importance of ensuring that all potential trade deals with Ukraine be dependent upon free, fair and transparent elections that comply with recognized international standards. As well, before the elections, all political prisoners would need to be released. The NDP also recommends that Canada work together with the European Union.

There is another example. That is why we insist on international co-operation when we debate issues that are so crucial to maintaining world peace.

● (2050)

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as a Canadian of Russian Ukrainian descent, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech and for his support for the Ukrainian people. I would also like to thank all the members of this House.

Over the past few days, anti-government demonstrations have been taking place across central and western Ukraine. On January 25 and 26, thousands of people were also seen protesting in Zaporozhye and Dnipropetrovsk, two cities in eastern Ukraine. What matters is that demonstrations are taking place all over the country. Could my colleague comment on my remarks?

● (2055)

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

As a member state of the United Nations, we need to keep in mind the UN's goals and principles any time a situation such as this one arises anywhere in the world. Respect for human rights is one of these key goals and principles. In cracking down on protesters in the streets of Ukraine, the Ukrainian government is failing in that regard. This failure is troubling and needs to be talked about. As a member of the United Nations, Canada has a duty to remind other states of their essential obligations.

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[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we have Canadians all across our land signing petitions. The Ukrainian Canadian Congress did a fantastic job in trying to capture the issue and now soliciting support by getting people to sign petitions. I was at a couple of events where the petition was circulated.

I want to make quick reference to the third point where it refers to imposing personal sanctions against those individuals, their family members and associates who are responsible for human rights violations, criminal activity or corrupt business practices in Ukraine.

My question for the member is that as Canadians as a whole see the value of taking more tangible action, what are his thoughts about taking selected, targeted sanctions and the benefit of Canada playing a stronger leadership role in that whole area? It is something I believe Canada is uniquely positioned to do and on which he might want to comment.

[Translation]

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his important question.

First and foremost, Canada needs to send a clear message regarding the current situation in Ukraine.

Our critic for foreign affairs made another suggestion I totally support: that we should consider sanctions against the people responsible for this violent repression. Perhaps we could keep them from travelling or seize their foreign assets. Harsh sanctions targeting the people responsible for the repression and human rights violations are in order.

[English]

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened very carefully to my colleague's comment when he said that Canada needs to send a clear message. It was December 10 when we had a debate in the House on this very issue. Since that time the Minister of Foreign Affairs has been in Ukraine with the protestors. I wonder if my colleague could comment on what kind of a strong message that this has sent the Ukrainian people. We believe that is the kind of strong message that Canada has sent, and I hope that my colleague would comment on that and affirm that it is indeed the message we have sent.

[Translation]

Mr. Romeo Saganash: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member opposite for her question. I want to comment on a point she raised.

I remember another debate in the House in which someone pointed out to a member of cabinet that we were involved in a demonstration occurring right outside our doors, and the minister told us to carry on, adding that, for their part, they intended to act. That is precisely what we want. We demand action from the government. There is a distinct lack of action at this point.

My colleague, the foreign affairs critic, made some suggestions earlier on, but now the time has come to act and to send an even stronger message than the one the member just suggested.

● (2100)

[English]

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to start by saying *dobry den* to all my Ukrainian friends and Ukrainian Canadians who I know are watching this evening.

I stand here with a great sense of frustration. As my colleague the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development mentioned, we were all here in December debating this very same issue. I myself have made four visits to Ukraine on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Government of Canada in the last two years. I visited Kiev, Kharkiv, Lviv, Sambir, and many other places. Wherever I went, I saw the people of Ukraine striving for democracy, freedom, a chance at a better economic future, integration with Europe, and yet the government of President Yanukovich refuses to listen to the people of Ukraine.

We sent a 500-person election monitoring mission to the last parliamentary elections in Ukraine, and we found many problems there. Canada sent the largest international election observation mission. Whether the next presidential election is held this year or in 2015, Canada will again be sending a large international election observation mission. Canada cares about Ukraine.

We should be here tonight celebrating the success of Ukraine. We should be celebrating Ukrainian democracy. We should be celebrating Ukraine's integration with Europe. Instead, we are here to once again condemn this repressive government that wants to continually repress its people's right to freedom and democracy. It wants to repress the rule of law, freedom of speech, and freedom of the press. It wants to hold back people's economic opportunities. In short, the Ukrainian government refuses to listen to the people it professes to govern and support.

I would like to begin by thanking all of the parties for agreeing to have this important emergency debate this evening. This is an issue that is near and dear to all of us in the House, given that Ukrainian Canadians have played such an instrumental role in building Canada.

More than 1.3 million Canadians have Ukrainian heritage. That number of people mixed among the total population of Canada, approximately 34 million Canadians, in my view makes Canada the most Ukrainian country in the world outside of Ukraine.

Whether we have Ukrainian heritage of our own or just have a good neighbour or friend of Ukrainian heritage, people all across Canada know the efforts Ukrainians have made for over 120 years to build this country. They are integrated in all levels of Canadian society. They are doctors, lawyers, athletes, musicians, and academics, and they are Canadians.

The first wave of Ukrainian immigrants to Canada came in, rode on a railway to the end of the line, were given a bag of seed and a shovel, and were told to walk another 100 miles, where they would find some land. Then they were to make it work. They opened up western Canada.

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In my hometown of Hamilton, Ontario, they came to work in the steel industries and built those industries. The neighbourhood where I grew up in Hamilton was 50% Ukrainian. Every day I saw how they contributed to this great country.

A few years ago I had the distinct honour of practising law with the Right Hon. Ramon Hnatyshyn, former Governor General of Canada, who was the first Governor General of Canada of Ukrainian origin and who held many roles in this very House as a member of Parliament for many years and in many different ministerial portfolios.

As we know, Canada has a long and proud history of supporting democracy in Ukraine. It is appropriate that Canada is having this emergency debate tonight, because on December 2, 1991, Canada became the very first western country to recognize Ukraine's independence. Ever since that day, Canada has had a strong connection with Ukraine. That recognition was initiated by former prime minister Mulroney.

In 2004, Canadians across this country watched their television sets as Ukrainians came together in that very same Maidan, asking for freedom in the Orange Revolution.

• (2105)

We were all glued to our TV sets to hear of the latest developments, and we were encouraged to see the outpouring of democracy in Ukraine. Unfortunately, things have taken a turn for the worse in recent years.

We implore the Ukrainian government to protect their people's right to peaceful, democratic protest and free speech. With tonight's emergency debate, we have the opportunity to send a strong message back to Ukraine and back to President Yanukovich and his regime.

Today Ukrainians in the Maidan and across Ukraine are rejecting their Soviet past and instead embracing western ideals of freedom, democracy, human rights, the rule of law, and balanced justice. That is what the people of Ukraine are saying with the recent protests. They are fighting for a better future. They are fighting for hope.

Canada's position has been clear. We are deeply disappointed with the Ukrainian government's reaction to these peaceful protests. The new laws passed by President Viktor Yanukovich give the Ukrainian government, police, and security services harsh new powers that severely limit individual rights and freedoms. Our government believes that this is fundamentally inconsistent with democratic practice and of grave concern to all those who are committed to a free and democratic Ukraine.

While in Kiev just this past December, our Minister of Foreign Affairs met with his Ukrainian counterpart, Minister Kozhara, to express Canada's grave concerns about the Ukrainian government's crackdown on mass protests. Our minister also expressed to Minister Kozhara Canada's expectation of the Ukrainian government to carry out an independent inquiry into the killings.

As a Canadian and a parliamentarian, I was proud to see our Minister of Foreign Affairs in Kiev defending the values we all hold dear. This was mentioned a few minutes ago in debate. Our minister, the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, went to the Maidan, to

Independence Square in Kiev, to stand with those protesters. I do not believe any other foreign minister in the world has done that.

Other members of this House, such as the member for Etobicoke Centre, were also there in December, standing shoulder to shoulder with the freedom-loving protesters in the Maidan and asking for a better future for all Ukrainians. At the same time, there were those in the opposition who were criticizing the Minister of Foreign Affairs for being there, suggesting that perhaps he should not be at a protest, because that would indicate that Canada was taking one side over the other. I think it was the right thing to do and I think most Canadians think it was the right thing to do.

Our government has been engaged on this file, and we will continue to be. We urge the Ukrainian government to find a political solution by engaging in a real dialogue. We urge all Ukrainians to avoid violence. Continued violence will further undermine democracy and freedom in Ukraine and bring serious consequences.

We will review and consider all possible options, together with our international partners. Our Minister of Foreign Affairs is meeting with the European Union foreign minister, the Hon. Catherine Ashton, and with other foreign ministers from the United States and from our other allies around the world so that we can collectively speak with a strong voice to condemn these actions in Ukraine and hopefully bring about some changes in Ukraine that will ensure freedom of protest and democracy and freedom of speech for the people of Ukraine. We will stand with the Ukrainian people, who courageously continue to speak out in support of democracy.

When we are discussing the current situation in Ukraine, I think it is also important to address the issue of religious freedom. I was pleased to see that Canada's ambassador for religious freedom, the Hon. Andrew Bennett, was just in Ukraine over this past weekend in order to raise Canada's concerns regarding the oppression of religious freedom and the attacks by the Yanukovich regime on the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church. The last time we saw such repression was under Joseph Stalin, and no one wants to see Ukraine return to those days.

While in Kiev, Ambassador Bennett met with various clergy, including His Beatitude Patriarch Sviatoslav of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church and Patriarch Filaret of the Orthodox Church. I would like to note that instead of suppressing the voices of religious groups, Ukraine should be embracing the important role that can be played by clergy and faith-based organizations in encouraging dialogue among all parties.

As history has shown us, the suppression of religious freedom is often a predictor for the abuse of other fundamental human rights. Freedom of speech, freedom of assembly, and freedom of religion are important principles of any truly democratic country. Canada has shown that we are committed to advancing democracy in Ukraine, and despite Ukraine's recent tilt toward Russia, our government remains committed to long-term democratic development there. In fact, in 2012 Canada fielded its largest-ever international electoral observation mission by sending 500 Canadians to Ukraine.

• (2110)

Overall, Canada provided \$11.4 million in support of the 2012 election process, particularly through Mission Canada, but also through support to Ukrainian civil society organizations that mobilized thousands of young volunteers to conduct their own election monitoring and public awareness campaigns.

Canada understands that a functioning and growing democracy needs active informed citizens, a free press, well functioning public institutions and the rule of law. Over the last 20-plus years, Canada has made an investment of approximately half a billion dollars in the development of democracy in Ukraine. That is because the people of Canada care about Ukraine. They want to see their friends and relatives, their brothers and sisters, the relatives of those who gave so much to our country have the same freedoms and opportunities for prosperity that we have here in Canada.

Canadian development assistance to Ukraine has always reflected this and will continue to do so. Despite Canada's ongoing contributions and those from many other countries wanting and working for a more free and democratic Ukraine, recent events demonstrate that a democratic deficit still exists.

Earlier this evening mention was made of the report by the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development to the House on the situation in Ukraine. That happened in May 2012. I was a member of that delegation, as was my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, and many other members of the House.

We visited Kharkiv, Kiev, Lviv and Sambir. We met with people from all walks of life in Ukraine, ranging from members of parliament, members of the government, and members of the opposition to academics and people in the media. We found that there were many problems that needed to be addressed in Ukraine. We submitted the report to the House and it is very instructive. I would encourage all members of the House to read that report, because there are issues going on in Ukraine that started quite a few years ago and continue. We have seen them get worse and worse these last few months in Maidan and other places across Ukraine.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, I want to thank you for granting us the ability to discuss the situation in Ukraine this evening. It is important for us to send a message that Canada and the world is watching. Canada is deeply troubled by the anti-democratic trends emerging in Ukraine. On that I will say that I have read quotes today by opposition leaders in Ukraine who know that this debate is taking place tonight in the Canadian Parliament. They are watching. Tomorrow the Verkhovna Rada will be meeting in Kiev. They will be debating these issues. I hope that these comments they are hearing tonight from us will give them courage to stand up for democratic principles and freedoms in Ukraine.

Canada is deeply troubled by these anti-democratic trends emerging in Ukraine, and our Prime Minister and our Conservative government will continue to stand with those Ukrainians who believe in freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Slava Ukraine! Slava Canada!

Mr. Paul Dewar (Ottawa Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the parliamentary secretary mentioned that the report by the foreign

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affairs committee, a committee that he used to be a member of, did mention to the House what was happening at the time. I am sure he would agree that things have deteriorated since then.

One of the things we have heard from the government that is important to note is that the government is saying that all options are open at this point and that it is going to consult with its allies to determine what action to take. We have talked to a number of our colleagues here whether they would support what we have been asking for, namely targeted sanctions, to look at visa bans, travel restrictions and aiding the people of Ukraine that way.

In terms of the consultations, does my colleague have any updates for the House on where we could possibly see this going? I think he would agree that we have raised the issue. December 10, 2013 was when we had the take note debate that he and his colleague referenced, and we all want to act on the unanimous consent motion. I wonder if he could update us and tell us what consultations are happening and when we could see some sort of pronouncement from the government about actions on sanctions or anything else.

• (2115)

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Speaker, targeted sanctions are definitely being considered. However, we need to make sure that whatever Canada does is consistent with what the European Union and the United States and other allies do. When we do these things together, they will have maximum impact.

Canada can certainly take a leading role and we are, which is why our minister is currently discussing these things with his counterparts. However, if we were to do it alone, I think the oligarchs, the members of the Yanukovich regime, might simply ignore it and say it is just one country and "what do we care about that".

When we all do it together, stand together, and say that they will not be able to travel to Canada, the United States, England, France, that they cannot take their kids to Disney World this year, or go to the south of France to live in that sea-side villa they paid for with ill-gotten money they stole from the Ukrainian people, then they will start to take notice. That is why our minister is conferring with our allies. I believe there will be an announcement in the ensuing days and that the member will be quite happy with what he hears.

Ms. Chrystia Freeland (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, does that answer of the hon. member for Mississauga—Erindale mean that Canada rules out acting unilaterally? Are we waiting for permission from the United States and the European Union to have targeted sanctions against the Ukrainian government, which is repressing its people?

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Speaker, I welcome the new member to the House. Had she been around in 2012, she would know about the leadership role that Canada took in sending its foreign affairs committee to Ukraine. We wrote a report that was widely distributed in Ukraine, Canada and around the world. We made some very strong statements in it.

Certainly we are not saying that we would rule out unilateral action, but at this point in time the best thing is to act in conjunction with others. When we bring all those forces together we will have maximum impact, and I believe that is what we will see happen. I am certainly looking forward to that and I know she is as well.

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Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, for his speech and for his work in his previous portfolio as parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and for his incredible knowledge of the situation in Ukraine.

We have been watching the situation slowly deteriorate for the last number of years. It started with Yanukovich coming to power. We saw some of the changes that have been made to election laws and we know that there has been a slow move to undermine the democratic will of the people. I guess the one thing that started to bring that to fruition was the drastic measures that President Yanukovich and his regime were prepared to take in imprisoning Yulia Tymoshenko, the legitimate opposition leader, the runner up in the presidential elections of 2010. She was wrongfully politically imprisoned through a showcase trial

Could the parliamentary secretary talk to that? The foreign affairs committee in the past studied the issue of eroding democratic rights and how the telling tale was when Yanukovich believed that if he could get away with that, "Just watch me now". That is why we find ourselves in the situation we are in today.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague not only for his question but also the tremendous service he has given Canada and democracy in Ukraine by being a co-sponsor of the motion we are debating this evening.

As the member would know, I had the opportunity to go to Kharkiv on two occasions, once on my own and once with the foreign affairs committee, to try to meet with Mrs. Tymoshenko. Clearly her imprisonment is politically motivated and just an example of what the government of Yanukovich is willing to do to repress political freedom in that country.

Mrs. Tymoshenko should be released. We have demanded that she be released. Canada was at the forefront of sending a medical team to Kharkiv to examine her in the prison hospital to find out what her medical problems were and to ensure that she got the proper medical treatment. We demand that she be released as part of any political process going forward. It is absolutely necessary to restore faith in democracy and it would be a good sign if the government of Ukraine were to release her immediately.

• (2120)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the parliamentary secretary for his speech, which was quite interesting.

I have a question for him about non-governmental organizations. They have quite an important role to play in supporting democratic forces in Ukraine. Are we doing enough to help them? What, specifically, are we doing to help? Have they asked the Government of Canada to help them out? Where are we at on the issue of non-governmental organizations?

[*English*]

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the hon. member for his very good question.

In fact, as I mentioned in my speech, Canada has been working with many non-governmental organizations in Ukraine to support the democratic process, both during the last parliamentary elections and, really, over the last 20 years, to help build democratic institutions and information systems that would allow the Ukrainian people to have the knowledge they need to elect democratic governments and to know when their democratic rights are being infringed.

During the last parliamentary election process, a significant amount of money was provided to Ukrainians for their own information and election monitoring processes. We continue to work with those non-governmental organizations. I met with many of them when I visited Ukraine. I know that the Minister of Foreign Affairs met with many of them, as has our Ambassador of Religious Freedom.

Therefore, there is a very significant role that non-governmental organizations can play and we will be continuing to support them in this current fight for democratic peaceful protest rights in Ukraine, and in the future for the democratic process there.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my hon. colleague the following question.

There are statements made by people around the world, especially on the Russian side, that bring the issue of Ukrainian unity into question. They want to deflect the real problems that exist in the country. They say these issues exist because there is a big difference between eastern Ukraine and western Ukraine, and recently Mr. Zhirinovskiy, the deputy speaker of the Russian lower house or Duma, said that if Stalin had divided Ukraine and taken it apart, there would not be the problems being experienced today.

Would my hon. colleague like to comment on how important it is for Ukrainians and the country of Ukraine to stay together despite the differences. Every country has its differences.

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Speaker, what was going through my mind earlier when my colleague, the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville, spoke was that this was a man who actually knows what he is talking about. He lived under a repressive communist regime in Poland, similar to the regime that people lived under in Ukraine during the Soviet times. He knows what it means to throw off the shackles of the old Soviet regime. There were always people in Ukraine and have been for decades, and I would say perhaps for centuries, trying to divide the Ukrainian people, but I reject this notion. The Ukrainian people are a distinct people. There is a distinct culture there. They have made great contributions throughout the centuries to the region and they deserve to stay together as one cohesive unit, not suffer the repression they have suffered in the past, and go forward, hopefully in a unified integrated way with Europe, with the opportunities that the people of Poland have had since their independence.

• (2125)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to mention that I will be splitting my time with the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue.

First off, I would like to thank the member for Selkirk—Interlake and the member for Etobicoke-Centre for having requested tonight's emergency debate.

It is of the utmost importance that we have such a debate tonight, because tomorrow morning, the Ukrainian Parliament will be in session. Everyone is wondering if it will enact martial law, which may include a blackout.

[English]

It is important that we are doing this tonight.

I would like to start by thanking my relative, Vitaliy Milentyev, who is the current president of the Alberta chapter of the Canada-Ukraine Chamber of Commerce. I have been receiving updates on the tragic situation in the Ukraine from him. In fact, last week my brother George and I were able to watch news clips from Ukraine when we spent some time with Vitaliy. What we saw was very disturbing.

I would like to share some background information that he sent to me today. However, first I would like to thank the Ukrainian Canadian Congress for its excellent briefing notes, which will be reflected in the debate tonight.

Also, I would like to emphasize that the outrage we are seeing in Ukraine is not confined to Kiev. It has been several days since anti-government protests have swept across central and western Ukraine, taking over regional administrative buildings. On January 25 and 26, two key industrial eastern cities, Zaporozhye and Dnepropetrovsk, which are traditionally seen as largely supporting the ruling party, have seen thousands of people rally on their main squares. In Zaporozhye, protestors are chanting slogans like “get out”, “Zaporozhye, wake up”, and they are singing the national anthem of Ukraine. There were also repeated calls for the governor of Zaporozhye region, Oleksandr Peklushenko, to resign. What we are seeing is not something that is confined to one part of Ukraine.

Here is some background information that I received today on what has happened since Yanukovich resumed power in 2010. Being backed by a majority of faithful MPs, he immediately appointed his close allies to the key positions in the country: chief justice of the constitutional court, head of a national bank, head of the ministry of finance, and head of customs and revenue service. Essentially all ministries and government departments are now headed by his subordinates.

The following transgressions of Yanukovich were also observed by the people of Ukraine, covered in media, and yet they have received no attention from the government.

There was the imprisonment for questionable charges of Yulia Tymoshenko and other leaders of the opposition, and key political figures. He first squeezed out the owners of large businesses, then smaller and smaller businesses. Any semi-successful business in Ukraine that shows any profit is now a target for Yanukovich's raider attacks.

Yanukovich's family, in four years, has become one of the richest and most powerful families in Ukraine by far. His son and son's friends are managing the empire. He has used taxpayers' money to build lavish residences for himself in national parks and heritage

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sites. There have been billions of dollars spent in open sight with absolutely no regard to public questioning of such expenses.

These are examples of what has become of a country ruled by one family.

I also have here a plea for help that I and my cousin Vitaliy received today from a friend of his who represents an intellectual elite of the Ukrainian legal system. He is one of the few judges with consciousness and dignity. Here is what he said:

Dozens of thousands of Ukrainians have been protesting in sub-zero temperatures for over 2 months now. (it's -15C in Kyiv now).

He continued:

Ukraine has clearly been mismanaged. The last “drop in the bucket” was a package of laws passed by the parliamentary majority almost two weeks ago that clearly violate basic constitutional and human rights, freedom of speech and freedom of expression.

The tension is escalating. The area of “Independence Square”...is growing every night. More and more administrative and ministerial buildings are being occupied by protestors. Clashes with riot police have turned deadly last week. Police have started grabbing people (often non-protesting bypassers) and throwing them behind bars. The count of jailed people is in the thousands now.

I fear for members of my family who are also there and involved in this protest.

● (2130)

He continues to say that the “Government of Canada, (along with the Governments of other countries) should immediately interfere and call to seek for compromise as the most realistic approach to resolving the crisis and to prevent any further bloodshed”. It is much easier, according to the judge, “to prevent a civil war than to deal with its consequences (take Syria as the most recent example).”

He also reminds us that we need to remind Yanukovich and his affiliates of the sanctions that can be introduced in the case of escalation of violence and offer political asylum to those clearly persecuted by the government. Dozens of prominent Ukrainian figures who oppose Yanukovich's regime are now under constant pressure by threats from law enforcement, and some of them have unfortunately disappeared. The worst is feared. Some had to flee the country with their families in fear for their lives.

I would like to take a moment to offer a quotation from my newly elected colleague, the MP for Toronto Centre. It is important. She has a good summary of what is going on in the country:

Ukraine today is poised between the establishment of a deeply rooted, hard-earned democracy and a return to bare-knuckle authoritarianism. The outcome is critical for Ukraine, of course, and the Ukrainian diaspora around the world, but it will also have a powerful demonstration effect in Russia, other former Soviet republics, and everywhere in the world where civil society is struggling against dictatorship. What happens in Ukraine matters to the prospects for democracy around the world. The good news is that we can make a difference.

In Ukraine we are seeing the struggle for human dignity, for the rule of law, for freedom of expression and association in its clearest form.

I would like to thank my colleague for that. I did not have time to read her whole article.

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I would like to run out my time by reading from an appeal of the people of Ukraine to the international community, entitled "...Please Act Now". It is dated January 24, 2014 at 2:14 p.m.:

This is our last plea for help. Tomorrow they might disconnect our phones and Internet, announce a state of emergency and kill us while the international community remains silent, upholding European values on paper only. People are dying for them in Ukraine, and will continue to die.

Citizens of Ukraine, representatives of civil organizations, active participants in the peaceful protest on the Maidan...in Kyiv and across the whole country appeal to the international community, national governments and international organizations to decisively intervene in the current situation in Ukraine in order to help Ukrainians secure peace and civil rights in this part of Europe. We need your help to stop this bloody, brutal and evil war, which criminal government authorities wage against their own people.

The response to the protesters' actions by the Ministry of Internal Affairs... Security Forces is outrageous. Police strongly violate human rights, secured by international conventions and Ukrainian legislation, particularly by using live ammunition and water cannons. At least five people have already been killed by sniper's bullets and torture by criminal thugs hired by the authorities to fight activists, and the fate of many others has not been determined. Hundreds of protesters were severely injured, among them dozens of medical workers and journalists, who have been intentionally shot by snipers from "Berkut"(riot police), mainly targeting their eyes. MIA Security Forces have kidnapped the severely wounded right from the hospitals, handcuffed, tortured and humiliated them. We ask you to note that despite the terror against protesters arranged by authorities all over country, and specifically in Kyiv, people's resistance, with only one exception, remains peaceful.

I have learned also that the government has been using what we call les agents provocateurs. In other words, they are hiring young thugs, who are poor or young people who do not have any money, dressing them up and getting them to take part on the side of the demonstrators to make it look as if demonstrators are committing the violence. That certainly has to stop.

I will continue with the appeal:

It has been two long months during which the government authorities of Ukraine have violently reacted to the peaceful protest of millions of Ukrainians. Partial radicalization of public attitudes in Kyiv is the outcome of brutal actions by police during crackdowns on the peaceful demonstrators on the 30th of November and 1st of December, absence of a response by the authorities to the EuroMaidan's demands, systemic repressions towards participants of the protests across the country, and adoption of illegitimate laws, that literally reify dictatorship in Ukraine. Violent resistance started when police blocked a peaceful protest against the abolishment of the rights of Ukrainians for non-violent protest, freedom of the press, freedom of expression, and fair trial.

As I am out of time, I should add, *Slava Ukraini*.

• (2135)

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the content that my colleague brought to the House because it is right from what is happening on the ground. I know he was not quite finished his speech. I know that he wanted to add more, and I am going to give him the opportunity to do that.

Before the House rose, we had a debate on this subject. It was around the same time that we were celebrating Nelson Mandela's life. When we look at the struggles that Nelson Mandela went through, we think about what is happening here today and the troubles that continue.

On that note, I hope my colleague would continue with the additional information he wanted to provide.

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: Mr. Speaker, I will not take too much time because there are other questions that I am sure people want to ask.

However, in this appeal, Ukrainians are demanding that the president, the cabinet and the ministers of the Ukraine immediately stop the violence that has been carried out by the ministry of internal affairs' security forces and hired criminal thugs.

They are asking us to come to the Ukraine to assess the situation from the inside and mediate negotiations between government authorities and citizens of the Ukraine in order to resolve the crisis, to send missions with observers to prevent the reification of the dictatorship, to protect fundamental human rights, to safeguard European democratic values in the Ukraine and to also impose personal sanctions on anyone who has been involved in violations of human rights in the Ukraine, ban their entrance into democratic countries, freeze their financial accounts, and to start investigations on money laundering.

That is the plea from the people of the Ukraine to us.

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my friend from B.C. for his intervention tonight. I also want to thank him because a lot of people often forget, going back to when we came forward in 2008 with my bill for recognizing the Holodomor as a genocide, that he seconded my bill. I have always appreciated his advocacy work on that issue.

As someone of Ukrainian heritage, I know he is quite concerned about what is happening in the Ukraine. He is well aware of how democracy has slowly deteriorated.

Earlier I was speaking about former prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko, who was imprisoned. That this was the first attack on democracy, when President Yanukovich and his regime effectively removed the opposition's voice two or three years ago. The measure that he used to charge her at a show cause hearing was that she had used her power while in office to negotiate a natural gas deal with Russia.

Does the member believe that the same measure, abuse of authority and power, should be used against President Yanukovich?

Mr. Alex Atamanenko: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for once again initiating this debate and for his hard work on behalf of Ukrainians throughout the world.

My family, like those of many Canadians, has suffered under the brutal Soviet regime. I heard stories when I first went there in 1971, and subsequently, of the brutality of the Soviet regime to the Ukrainian people. It confiscated grain and other goods and actually sent them to support the German empire. However, that is another story.

When we are dealing with someone like Yanukovich, I think he needs to be dealt with in a democratic fashion, but firmly.

The people of the Ukraine have spoken. We need to support them by saying we are going to freeze his assets. We are going to ensure he does not have a chance to escape the country. We are not going to give him immunity like Yushchenko. I did not understand this, but apparently Yushchenko, the former president, was given immunity. He was not thrown into jail. A deal was struck and he was given all sorts of immunity; whereas Tymoshenko was put in jail.

Yanukovych needs to be treated in a democratic fashion, but he needs to be treated firmly. That country has to come back on a democratic path.

• (2140)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before I start my speech, I would like to explain why the member for Abitibi—Témiscamingue, in northern Quebec, is rising to speak to the situation in Ukraine.

To explain, I want to share a little of my riding's history. During the First World War, we were allies with Great Britain. At some point, an order was issued to intern enemies of the state, people who were of German origin, from the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Accordingly, 24 internment camps were set up in Canada, including four in Quebec. The first was set up in Spirit Lake, a small village next to my riding. This was, unfortunately, a strategic place to intern people, because when the camp was opened in 1915, the railway was virtually the only thing there.

Therefore, these people were in the middle of nowhere, in a desolate, tree-covered landscape. In the winter, it was bleak, snow-covered landscape. All that they had to monitor was the railway.

About 1,200 prisoners passed through the camp between 1915 and 1917. For the most part, they were Ukrainians. There were 200 soldiers guarding the prisoners and some civilians worked there. More than 50 buildings were built over two kilometres of land. Twenty-two people died there, and 19 of them were buried in a nearby cemetery.

I think it is important to explain why there is a Ukrainian community in Abitibi—Témiscamingue, as odd as this may seem.

The Spirit Lake camp interpretive centre opened not too long ago, at the start of my term. The Minister of Employment and Social Development, the parliamentary secretary for national defence and the member for Etobicoke—Lakeshore came with me to the opening of the centre to remember and acknowledge these events.

My riding also saw a second wave of immigration after the Second World War. Immigrants from Eastern Europe came to work in the mines and the smelter, and Ukrainians started to come, too. They left their mark on the region. Many buildings were built for the Ukrainian community.

Many people of Ukrainian descent settled in the area. Some changed their names. They cut off the ending so their name would sound more French-Canadian. When we ask about their history, we find out that they changed their name, so there are even more Ukrainians in the region than we may think. They have been in Abitibi since the beginning.

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Abitibi's first city, Amos, is celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2014. Ukrainians arrived basically when the city was being built. They were there when the first cities were established. They have always been part of life in Abitibi.

That is why I wanted to take the time to explain why I felt strongly about speaking.

People are still attached to Ukraine. That is why I was delighted, last November, when the Department of Foreign Affairs selected me and my colleague from Etobicoke—Lakeshore to take part in a ceremony marking the 80th anniversary of Holodomor.

My colleague and I were supposed to take part in the ceremony. Holodomor refers to a time in 1932 and 1933 when millions of Ukrainians fell victim to a widespread Soviet famine. A huge number of people died. It is a sad period in Ukrainian history.

This ceremony was important to me, since I am aware of how important Ukrainians have been in my riding's history.

• (2145)

My colleague and I were supposed to leave on November 21. A few minutes before departure, we were told that we were no longer leaving because of what had happened and been set in motion. I want to point out that on November 21, the Ukrainian government suspended its preparations for the signing of the association agreement with the European Union. This news triggered the first wave of protests. Although these protests were democratic, they were violently repressed by the police. Therefore, we did not go to Kiev.

Since then, the violence has continued in a rather marked fashion in Ukraine, even though protesters are peaceful. They want a new truly democratic presidential election.

Some people in my community are affected by the situation. Jim Slobodian, who has worked for years to see the opening of the Spirit Lake camp said that, of course, people are affected when they look at what is happening. Mr. Slobodian, a native of Rouyn-Noranda, explained that his father came from Ukraine in 1920. His father said that even at the time, when he left Ukraine at the age of 16, the Russians were really domineering and that was one reason why he left the country with his brothers. They could no longer withstand this treatment.

Therefore, this situation has a real impact on certain people in my riding. These events affect them and concern them.

Father Lev Chayka, who founded the Ukrainian churches of Val-d'Or and Rouyn-Noranda 60 years ago, is following the discussions on the crisis very closely. He hopes the Ukrainian people's protest will have a positive effect on the European Union. He is also praying that Viktor Yanukovych will step down and elections are held in Ukraine to elect a president who supports the European Union. He also expressed his fear of the Russian government, which, in his opinion, is trying to build an empire. I would like to point out that Father Chayka is 90 years old. He says this is not just about trade, but about building another Russian empire today, as under Stalin.

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People are very worried about this situation. What the descendants of Ukrainian immigrants in my riding want for their people is the right to free speech and to peaceful protest, so that they can be proud of their country.

I talked about all of the links with people in my riding. They want Canada to use its position to play a leading role in bringing back democracy as much as possible. We have many connections to Ukraine, so we can play a major role in bringing swift resolution to this conflict. Protesters have been killed, young people like me. It is heartbreaking to think that these people died because they wanted democracy and freedom.

The situation is all the more alarming because people are afraid there might be more violence. We hope that will not be the case; we do not want the protesters to be punished again, nor do we want more young people to be killed during protests.

Canada must play an effective leading role in trying to find solutions to bring democracy back to Ukraine.

• (2150)

Mr. Bernard Trottier (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to my colleague from Abitibi—Témiscamingue's speech.

In 2012, I went to the opening of Spirit Lake camp. The camp commemorates a very sad time in the country's history: the internment of Ukrainians during the First World War. It is something we must never forget.

It is now 2014. My colleague talked about the leading role that Canada can play in resolving the situation in Ukraine. Can she explain the measures that Canada can take along with like-minded counterparts from other countries to bring freedom and democracy to Ukraine?

What can we do together with allies that share the hopes and dreams of Ukrainians to help the people of Ukraine?

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, at the very least, I believe we should use diplomacy to take a firm stance with the Ukrainian president.

Then, Canada should start considering the option of imposing sanctions such as travel bans and asset freezes on those responsible for the crackdown. The government should also hold discussions with our allies to determine if other measures should be taken.

I suggest that Canada stand firm and use the political clout afforded to us by the large number of Ukrainians currently residing here, while at the same time relying on diplomacy.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, my question is in relation to the question that was just asked, when the member made reference to what we could do with other countries around the world. My question is more specific. Canada does have a strong leadership role that it could play, even if it means going alone. Many Canadians would agree that Canada is positioned strongly enough that it could take targeted sanctions, that we do not have to wait for other countries in order to take such sanctions.

My question for the member is: To what degree does the member believe this? The member for Wascana, back in December, made it very clear that Canada could go alone on targeted sanctions, if need be, and we should be taking those targeted sanctions. We do not have to wait for countries like the U.S. and European countries to take targeted sanctions. What does she feel? Should we wait for other countries or should Canada be prepared to go alone, as we believe?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, I believe I already addressed that question in my answer to the previous question.

Canada should start considering the option of imposing sanctions on those responsible, such as travel bans and asset freezes.

I do not believe we should wait for other countries to act first. We can impose sanctions independently. At the same time, we can discuss options with our allies. When it comes to sanctions, however, Canada can act alone at any time, if it so desires and deems it appropriate.

• (2155)

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I truly appreciate my hon. colleague's speeches today in the House.

Indeed, I think Canada has an important role to play in this crisis. We need to assert Canada's power, since after all, we are a G8 country. I think we need to exercise Canada's full authority, especially when it comes to protecting the democratic rights of people in a western country.

The question I would like to ask my colleague concerns the possibility that Canada intervene more directly with its partners—specifically the United Nations, which has not yet been called upon. We do not have a direct role to play with the European Union. However, we have an important role to play in the G8 and with many non-governmental organizations.

What sort of interventions might Canada propose to put even more pressure on the Ukrainian government? Apart from that, how can we participate alongside our partners?

Ms. Christine Moore: Mr. Speaker, that was a rather long question, but I will try to give a simple example. For example, if there were some sort of co-operation among countries, the current trade relations with Ukraine could be used to add a little pressure. I think there are many possible answers to that question; this is only one example among many, but I would need more time to answer such a long question.

[*English*]

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be splitting my time with the very hon. member for Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, whose speech will be much more worth listening to than mine.

I recommend that all members stay tuned to this space at the centre of Canada's democracy as we discuss an issue of global moment and importance. It is a political crisis in Ukraine, but is one that has significance for all of us who care about freedom, democracy, and the spread of values that Canadians hold dear in Europe and around the world, and above all, for the people of Ukraine who are living in fear again. They are living in fear that the achievements of well over two decades, and the achievements of Ukrainian civilization over centuries and millennia, may once again be under threat because of arbitrary decisions and because of violence that has been used against them, against ordinary citizens exercising their democratic right to freedom of assembly and freedom of speech in that place that is sacred to all Ukrainians, the Maidan at the centre of Kiev.

I am honoured to be here with so many distinguished colleagues following such an informative debate that has shown how much Canada cares. In asking ourselves why we are here tonight, why this debate is taking place on the first day of this new session in 2014 in Canada's Parliament, we have to look no further than our own history, our own roots, and our own core.

I am looking over at the member of Parliament for Toronto Centre, a new member in this place, who speaks a high quality of Ukrainian. I think her Russian is quite good, too. I can understand her Russian, but the quality of her Ukrainian is certainly second to none in this place and is probably second to none among parliamentarians in NATO countries. That speaks to us as a nation in understanding what Ukraine is going through and in living that reality because of who we are.

Before 1914, 170,000 Ukrainians called Canada home. They opened the west. They settled parts of this country that others were not willing to settle. It was quite cold, from what I understand, even then, and still is. The sod had to be turned. The railway had just been built. Spurs were still under construction.

They stood that test and built a great society in western Canada. Today at least 1.3 million Canadians trace their ancestry to Ukraine. We are proud of their contribution. As the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, I am very proud that in our *Discover Canada* guide, brought forward by my predecessor, now the Minister of Employment and Social Development, we recall that the first Victoria Cross anywhere in the British Empire awarded to one who was not born in that empire went to Corporal Filip Konowal, born in Ukraine, who showed exceptional courage in the battle of Hill 70 in 1917. He was the first member of the Canadian Corps not born in the British Empire to be awarded the Victoria Cross.

We on this side of the House are proud that Michael Starr, my neighbour, who represented part of what is now my riding, was the first member of a Canadian cabinet with Ukrainian roots. That was way back in 1957 under the great Right Hon. John George Diefenbaker.

We think of Ivan Pylypiw and Wasyl Eleniak, the first Ukrainian immigrants to Canada in 1891. There may have been others before them, but that is what our history records. They were the first we have a record of. Thousands, indeed millions, came later. Today the tradition continues in that we have a first-rate immigration program in Kiev. We have welcomed more students in the past year than ever

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before in history. Our approval rate from visitors from Ukraine is higher than ever.

• (2200)

A record number of visitors came from Ukraine in 2012 and 2013, getting into five figures. All of this is because we believe in Ukraine's vocation as a member of a greater Europe and as a member of a greater global community dedicated to the principles of peace, freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law.

That is why we are here tonight. We are here tonight because of their determination and their sacrifice to which we have been connected every step of the way.

It was not yesterday, and certainly not only in 1991, that Ukraine began its march to statehood. There have been four or five different initiatives and attempts to establish Ukrainian statehood on a firm foundation in the 20th century, and even earlier.

The 1991 experience is important to us, because we understand Ukraine's role in world civilization and in European civilization. It was because of this that Canada was the first country out of the gate. It took some doing, in those dark days at the end of 1991, to be the first at the door of the new Ukrainian state to say, "We recognize your independence. We recognize your dignity among the community of nations. We recognize your aspiration to live the values of democracy to their full potential". Canada was the first country to recognize a free Ukrainian state in 1991. That is why we are one of the first countries to have a debate in a democratic forum, with all parties agreeing on the thrust of our concern about the current crisis in Ukraine.

Why has it come about? It is very simple. The aspiration of a people to reclaim their birthright and their historical tradition of being at the centre of European and global civilization has been thwarted and is under threat of being put on a side track and taken off course for a long period of time if we all stand idle.

I had the honour of serving our country on two occasions in the Russian Federation. It was a country itself dedicated, at least starting in 1990 and 1991, to democracy in its constitution. Elections have been held. Many Russians, some of whom have demonstrated in recent years, are absolutely determined to see democracy embraced in their country.

The current President of the Russian Federation made a claim some years back that I think all members of the House would find outrageous. He said that the greatest crime, the greatest disaster, the greatest catastrophe of the 20th century was the breakup of the Soviet Union. Shame. Shame on any world leader who would say that. Shame on President Vladimir Putin for having said that in the face of victims of the Holodomor, victims of repression inside and outside the Soviet Union, and victims of sectarian wars to establish one-party violent communist state regimes in all parts of the world. Shame on anyone who would see that legacy, the disappearance of that legacy, and the holding to account of that legacy as a catastrophe.

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On the contrary, we on this side of the House, and I hope all members of this place, understand that the fall of the Berlin Wall and the breakup of the Soviet Union were great moments for the triumph of the human spirit and the triumph of values in which we believe. It is those values for which individual Ukrainian civilians are standing up on the Maidan. They are standing up, through their collective aspiration to have an association agreement with Europe, to have their rights protected and to continue the freedom of speech that flourished in Ukraine over the past 20 years but which now has been curtailed and is under threat.

• (2205)

It is for that reason we are here tonight, together, to contemplate what options Canada and other democracies have should negotiations fail and should the blackmail that has been coming from some quarters in Russia, and elsewhere beyond Ukraine's borders, succeed in thwarting the dreams and aspirations of an entire people.

Canada is a country whose foreign policy has always succeeded when we take positions of principle, when we take positions that reflect our own success as a nation, as an economy, and as a free people. It is that position we are taking tonight. It is that principle upon which we are standing tonight, and I am proud to be here with all of my colleagues to speak in favour of a free Ukraine. *Slava Ukraini.*

We must stand up to bullying in our streets and communities, in Europe, in eastern Europe, and around the world. This is one case when we, as Canadians, must stand up and be counted.

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I heard my hon. colleague talk about principles. One of the options suggested by the Ukrainian Canadian Congress was that Canada accept Ukrainian refugees, especially people who have been injured during demonstrations, in order to provide them with care.

I wonder if my colleague could say whether he agrees that we should provide medical care to people arriving from Ukraine whose refugee status was still to be determined.

• (2210)

Mr. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, of course my hon. colleague is aware of Canada's offer to provide health care to Mrs. Tymoshenko and to play a primary role in protecting human rights in Ukraine.

In that regard, when Canada talks, people listen. Our development assistance programs have always played a central role when it comes to human rights in Ukraine and the development of justice institutions in Ukraine. Our asylum and immigration programs, including our humanitarian programs are open to Ukrainians at a time when their needs are great.

What we will not do is put ourselves between the two sides, in a void reminiscent of the worst days of the Trudeau regime, when the Government of Canada's policy involved the appeasement of the Soviet Union, which had a policy to integrate Ukraine and a number of other countries into a system based on violence.

We are siding with democracy, the opposition and human rights, and we are not afraid to say so.

[English]

Ms. Chrystia Freeland (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would first like to thank the hon. Minister of Citizenship and Immigration for his praise of my Ukrainian language skills. We first met in Kiev when he was serving our country very skilfully and admirably as a diplomat. I think that was longer ago than either one of us cares to remember.

The hon. minister said that this is one case when Canada must stand up and be counted and that we are on the side of democracy. I think all of us agree. The hon. minister also said that all parties are agreeing with the thrust of this discussion. I think we all agree with that, too. However, I have a specific question.

It is the position of the Liberal Party of Canada that we should now, in response to the indeed crucial and grievous situation in Ukraine, unilaterally impose personal, directed sanctions against President Yanukovich and his allies in government. That is the clearly stated position of the Liberal Party of Canada. I believe it clearly reflects the thrust of our discussion tonight. Is that or is that not the position of the Government of Canada?

Mr. Chris Alexander: Mr. Speaker, the hon. member certainly knows Ukraine and she certainly knows Russia, and that knowledge will continue to be relevant to the development of Canadian policy in the months and years to come.

We have said very clearly that all options are on the table. That includes dramatic options. That includes options that have been suggested by members on this side and by our friends and allies. We look forward to being able to return to this place to say exactly what course of action we as a government recommend.

We have also been unambiguous in condemning the government of President Yanukovich for its use of violence, for the command and control arrangements that allowed that violence to be used against innocent protesters, for the lack of due process in passing repressive laws, and we stand by those condemnations with our friends and allies across NATO and beyond.

It is very important to understand the weight of our words and actions and the weight we will have as an international community if we act in concert, in unity. We have seen President Putin gain a certain amount of diplomatic prestige with his work in Syria, where he seems to care nothing for the fate of that civilian population. We have seen him sometimes side with the Iranian regime, countered only by united western pressure to impose some of the toughest sanctions in a generation in that country, which has changed the atmosphere and may yet still lead to a better result in Iran.

On Ukraine, the stakes are as high or even higher, and we, as I think any Liberal government in the past would have recognized, have a strong interest in consulting with our allies and making sure the actions we take hit as hard and serve as truly the interests of Ukrainian people as we can possibly ensure.

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• (2215)

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Mr. Speaker, since our last take note debate on Ukraine on December 10, the situation has escalated to the point where Canada can no longer stand by without taking action. Canada was both shocked and disappointed when the Ukrainian government suddenly announced on November 21 that it would not pursue an association agreement and a deep and comprehensive free trade area with the European Union. This was an abrupt reversal from years of planning and earnest negotiations on the part of our European partners. As millions of Ukrainians agree, Canada believes that the Ukraine's future lies in a free Europe.

One day after our debate on December 10, the Ukraine authorities ordered the use of riot police against peaceful demonstrators in Kiev's market square. The Prime Minister issued a statement to express his deep concern regarding the use of force against Ukrainian citizens who were within their rights to protest and express their opinions. As protesters demonstrated in the hopes that it would change the future of their country and bring them closer to Europe, braving harsh winter conditions to stage 24-hour protests, President Yanukovich again blighted the Ukrainians' faith for a better future.

On December 17, President Yanukovich travelled to Russia to be with President Putin, where he accepted a \$15 billion aid package along with reduced prices for natural gas.

Far from calming protesters, this deal had the opposite effect and massive rallies took place in Kiev and other parts of the Ukraine. University students and staff joined in the protests to express their discontent, but Ukrainian officials attempted to apply pressure on the administration students of the Ukrainian Catholic universities across the country, and Ambassador Bennett, Canada's ambassador for religious freedom, issued a statement to express his concern about these attacks on freedom of speech, freedom of assembly and freedom of religious educational institutions to operate without undue interference.

As the holidays settled in and a sense of calm took over the main square in Kiev, a prominent Ukrainian activist and journalist, Tatiana Chornovil, was ruthlessly beaten to the point of disfigurement. Ms. Chornovil now requires reconstructive surgery because of the severe beatings that were inflicted upon her. Once again, this move inflamed Ukrainian protesters and revived their determination to fight against oppression and violence.

Instead of showing any willingness to diffuse the situation and negotiate with the Ukrainian citizens, Mr. Yanukovich opted to enact new laws that introduced criminal liabilities for seizing or occupying buildings.

On January 11, Yuri Lutsenko, former minister of the interior, was injured in clashes between police and anti-government activists as he tried to diffuse the situation.

On January 16, the situation in the Ukraine took a decisive turn for the worse when a series of repressive laws was rushed through parliament without a proper vote. These laws substantially limit the rights and freedoms of Ukrainians, constrain independent media and inhibit the operation of non-government organizations. These laws

also give new powers to the police and security services. Despite their unconstitutionality, President Yanukovich signed these laws the next day.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs expressed Canada's deep concerns about the new draconian laws. He called on the Ukrainian government to reverse its decision on legislation that would give the government tools to control its population and thwart democratic expression, a situation our minister called completely unacceptable. He said that Canada was ready and prepared to consider all options to make clear on whose side we stand.

• (2220)

Canada condemned in the strongest possible terms the killing of protestors in Ukraine. The deputy minister of foreign affairs called in the Ukrainian ambassador to express Canada's condemnation of the violence used by Ukrainian security forces. The minister stated that continued violence would further undermine democracy and freedom in Ukraine and bring serious consequences. The unrest has now spread well beyond the capital into other parts of Ukraine, with no end in sight.

Even as President Yanukovich attempted to negotiate with the opposition and made several important concessions—the first ones to date, actually—for the Ukrainians these were too little too late. Ukrainians have made it clear that they will accept no less than the dismissal of the cabinet of ministers and early elections.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs also sent Canada's ambassador for religious freedom to Ukraine this past weekend to express our ongoing concerns about the violations of basic freedoms and reinforced Canada's commitment to the Ukrainian people.

While Kiev is under a fragile truce, it is clear that the situation has evolved to the point of no return. Ukrainians have taken a stance for freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

I should make the point that my constituency of Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette has one of the highest populations of people of Ukrainian descent in the entire country, and my constituents are deeply concerned about the situation in Ukraine. They have been watching the situation unfold in Ukraine with increasing angst. Although they are proud of the stance Canada has taken vis-à-vis the deplorable acts of the Ukrainian government, they have made it clear that they expect Canada to hold individuals responsible for the oppression and violence, accountable for their actions.

I would make the point also that I am a child of the 1960s. I remember 1968 when the Russians invaded Czechoslovakia. I am of Czech extraction and my family living in Winnipeg took in refugees from the Czech Republic at that time. So I have a deep and a visceral commitment to the freedom of people of eastern Europe.

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Again, when I see what is going on in Ukraine, I am deeply troubled, not just from a political perspective but from a personal perspective. The Government of Canada is determined to continue to assist the Ukrainian people in achieving their aspirations for a fully free and democratic society, while helping to transform Ukraine's economy into a more transparent, rules-based and liberalized marketplace, better equipped to integrate with a more diversified global economy.

The Government of Canada has also made it clear that the actions of the Ukrainian officials responsible for the violence and repressions will not go unpunished.

I should also make the point that I am very proud to be a part of a caucus that has a member like the member for Mississauga East—Cooksville. The member fought on the side of solidarity in Poland. The member has skin in the game. The member has blood in the game, like many of us on this side of the House, and we are deeply concerned about what is happening in eastern Europe. For us, as I said, this is not political; it is visceral.

Our Canadian values and our deep and long-standing friendship with the Ukrainian people demand nothing less of us.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments made by my colleague from Dauphin.

There is no doubt and we can never express the degree in which Canadians as a whole look at what is happening in Ukraine today and not get quite emotional and acknowledge that what is happening there is just wrong. We believe in freedoms. We believe in the rule of law. These are fundamental principles. When we see what is taking place in Ukraine, we want to see the Canadian government do what it can to send a very strong message. That is exemplified by the number of people who are participating and getting engaged in a wide variety of ways to ensure that the people of Ukraine, and I underline the word “people”, do know that Canadians are behind what they are trying to accomplish.

Could the member provide some feedback from his personal perspective representing constituents of Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette as to what he has conveyed to them or how they are conveying information to him?

• (2225)

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Mr. Speaker, when I look at the Ukrainian people in Canada and reflect upon their accomplishments, I see that what they have done is remarkable. In my particular constituency, Ukrainian people are some of the best farmers in the area and some of the best business people. They are very hard-working and have a fierce attachment to property rights. The Ukrainian people have contributed mightily to what makes Canada survive.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank our colleague for his speech. It was interesting. He talked about how his family took in refugees from Czechoslovakia, now the Czech Republic, in the 1960s.

I would like to say that my family did the same. We took in Czechoslovakian refugees in 1968. I do not think those particular refugees were worried about not having access to medical care, unlike refugees today, who no longer have access to medical care

thanks to changes made by the Conservative government. That is a big problem for refugees today. At least in the 1960s, we treated refugees a little better.

The United States announced that it was revoking the visas of individuals linked to violence in Ukraine against people in favour of a European democratic movement.

Why has the Canadian government not done the same as the Americans by banning visas to Ukrainians linked to the violence going on now?

[*English*]

Mr. Robert Sopuck: Mr. Speaker, obviously the member's points were bogus. The point is that his party and the other party over there, over the decades, enabled Communist and left-wing regimes to thrive and prosper. Actually, they have a lot to atone for with what is happening today. The sooner they understand what they have done and what their parties have done and the sooner they realize what they need to do to atone for the crimes that they have enabled, the sooner we will be better off.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I would like to say that I will share my time with the hon. member for Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasung.

Naturally, we are all concerned about the situation in Ukraine and by developments in recent days. Clearly, this is an emotional issue for many in the House tonight. This all started with the European Union association agreement, but it is not really about the European Union association agreement. What this is really about is democracy, human rights and, most of all, dignity. That is what the people of Ukraine took to the streets to demand. Democracy has never been simple in Ukraine. There have been many difficulties and challenges, challenges that the people have met bravely. On January 16, there was an attempt to further paralyze the Ukrainian people's pursuit of progress. Under the circumstances, we have to send a strong message to the Ukrainian authorities, and that is why we are all here tonight.

Sending a strong message is not enough, though. We must act. We must prevent this spiral of chaos and violence from escalating. We can take action. Of course, we would be in a much better position to intervene if we had tools such as those that were promised, including the institute for democratic development, which this government never set up, or the famous Rights and Democracy organization, which did an excellent job in this kind of situation. This does not prevent us from taking action. We have talked a lot tonight about working with our international partners to determine sanctions. I am not talking about just any sanctions. We do not want to attack or hurt Ukrainians. I am talking about truly targeted sanctions against the leaders and those who are taking this reprehensible action in Ukraine.

I also said we should work with our partners, with our allies. This evening, I have found it very interesting to see that, on the one hand, some are proposing to wait to see what Europe, the United States and other countries will do and, on the other hand, others want to act unilaterally. There is another possibility between those two options that would show true leadership, namely to take the initiative and push our partners to act to implement some sanctions or measures I will elaborate on in a moment.

I would be curious to know which proactive measures the government has taken to push our partners to act, instead of just waiting for them to act and then following suit. That would be true leadership, and Canada should display true leadership regarding Ukraine. We are all aware of the close historic ties between our two countries. In fact, that is why Canada was the first country to recognize Ukraine's independence in 1991.

● (2230)

We should be playing a leadership role. Isolationism is not the answer and neither is a wait-and-see approach. We must take action.

There are countless options. Obviously, we must prevent the leaders and those I would call the troublemakers, the people involved in the repression, from being able to travel to Canada. Again, with our partners, we must prevent them from being able to travel anywhere. We must freeze their assets. It is important to work with our partners on this and then we can accelerate the movement.

It is a question of sanctions, but beyond sanctions we can also take more positive measures. That is more or less what the Ukrainian Canadian Congress recommends. For example, we could provide asylum to Ukrainians or to family members of the protesters who were killed, speed up the visa process, take in the injured here in Canada and treat them. We are hearing reports that the police are rounding up the injured in hospitals and leaving them in the forest. In any case, many of the stories are going to require further investigation. In the meantime, these are the measures that Canada could be taking to save lives.

Again, the Ukrainian Canadian Congress would like to see help on the ground such as the construction or operation of an emergency hospital with the Red Cross because the situation has become quite dire. These are things we could consider.

Obviously, as I was saying, we must monitor the situation closely. Knowing my former colleagues, I am sure that our ambassador is doing extraordinary work monitoring and looking at what is happening on the ground, but we must also look to the future.

These are some of the measures we could be taking. I say "could", but it is our duty. We must support the people of Ukraine at this difficult time in their history.

Before closing, I would like to take this opportunity to commend the courage of all those who stand up to defend their rights and dignity in the cold, in fear, because there is a tremendous amount of oppression and intimidation. People are being beaten and humiliated. I would like to commend the courage of these people who stand up and say no and defend their rights.

Unfortunately, I do not speak Ukrainian, but all those people there who are fighting are speaking the language of dignity. They are

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speaking the language of hope and that is a language that we all share.

● (2235)

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for her speech.

One very troubling aspect of the situation in Ukraine is that all of the existing parties are hardening their positions. First, there is the ruling power. As my colleague pointed out, as a result of this hardened stance, we are hearing rumours about repression—real or not—of protesters. Some things are very obvious, with images of chaos and violence against the public.

I would like my colleague to give us an idea of the assets we already have in place. She mentioned the work done by her former foreign affairs colleagues. What means does Canada have to take meaningful action, not only against the ruling power, but also in support of the individuals who have been repressed or injured and who need help and support?

● (2240)

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague for his question.

We cannot simply say that we condemn the situation and that these kinds of things are not good. Unfortunately, as we are seeing far too often these days, our foreign policy involves people standing up and making all kinds of noise to condemn a situation. That is not enough.

In the case of Ukraine, could we not provide some assistance to facilitate a dialogue between the opposition and the current president? This has been suggested by others.

We need to look at these kinds of issues. We must also not be afraid of saying there will be sanctions if the situation is not resolved.

However, we must also find a solution. We must help the people who are on the ground and who are fighting to defend their rights.

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, is the hon. member aware that, according to our current immigration laws, people from Ukraine—or anywhere else in the world—are not eligible to come to Canada if they have committed a crime against humanity or a war crime, if they are a member of a spy or intelligence agency that is targeting Canada, or if they have been involved in incidents that would be considered crimes in Canada?

That is the system that currently applies to anyone who requires a visa to come to Canada.

Instead of talking about measures that Canada can take and that we will continue to consider in partnership with our allies, is the member ready to say that enough is enough, that Russia is interfering in Ukraine's domestic affairs, and that Ukrainians have the right to be in charge of their own affairs without Moscow's input and without nostalgia for the former U.S.S.R.? Does she agree that part of the real problem is Moscow?

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Speaker, to respond to the first part of the question, yes, I am aware of all the restrictions.

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However, does that mean that the hon. member wants to wait for years while an investigation is conducted to determine whether crimes against humanity were committed or whether incidents occurred that would be considered crimes here? In the meantime, will we sit idly by and let the current leaders, the people who are responsible for the repression, come to Canada when we could impose travel restrictions on a number of people?

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, NDP): Mr. Speaker, perhaps you are wondering why a member from northern Ontario wants to talk about this. I think that this affects everyone in Canada.

[English]

There are approximately 1.2 million Canadians who have Ukrainian ancestry in Canada. The population in northern Ontario includes over 40,000 people of Ukrainian descent. That is quite a few. In the riding of Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusking, there are many Ukrainians who have helped to build a lot of the communities. Some of them came as a result of war situations. Others came to work in the mines and the mining sector, and they have helped to build our country. I know they are watching this very passionately, as are some people in Parliament who are still overlooking this at this late hour.

I have pulled a few things together tonight to provide some of the background for people who might just be joining in.

The demonstrations are the biggest that the country has seen since the Orange Revolution, which toppled the government nine years ago.

When we look at the motion we are discussing today, I can say what the NDP motion would have been. It would have said:

That the House condemn the killing and injuring of peaceful protestors and other alarming violations of freedom of speech and association in Ukraine, and request that the Government of Canada take strong action in consultation with international partners, including individual sanctions against those responsible for human rights abuses, repressive measures, and violent crackdowns.

The important piece has the words “take strong action in consultation with international partners”.

Through discussion, it was decided that the motion would come from the government side. The motion that came forward said:

That this House:

Condemns the draconian law that was adopted in Ukraine on January 17, 2014 that severely limits the rights of Ukrainians to peacefully organize, assemble or protest;

Recognizes that such a law undermines freedom and democracy in Ukraine;

Condemns the Ukrainian government's use of violence and threats of legal action against the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church for helping peaceful protestors;

Expresses condolences to the friends and families of those who lost their lives at the hands of Ukrainian security forces on January 21, 2014;

Calls upon the Ukrainian government to bring those responsible for these acts of violence and repression to justice;

Continues to call for Ukrainian security forces and government to refrain from the use of violence and respect the people of Ukraine's right to peacefully protest;

Urges the Government of Canada, in collaboration with like-minded nations, to consider all options, including sanctions, to ensure that the democratic space in Ukraine is protected;

And that this House stands united with the Ukrainian people who believe in freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

The difference is that we had in our language “to take strong action” and this says “consider all options”. I am glad we can consider all options, but we also have to consider a little more and decisively decide on taking strong action if things are not resolved.

New Democrats, and I believe this whole House, stand with the people of Ukraine. We are deeply concerned by the government's use of force against peaceful protesters, and we remain hopeful that tomorrow's Ukrainian parliamentary session will see concrete solutions being put into place. We know that the EU diplomat Catherine Ashton has a planned visit to Ukraine, within 48 hours she has said, which would have her arrive there tomorrow. We hope that Mr. Yanukovich and the opposition leaders who will be meeting with her will be able to come to a peaceful solution on this.

It is noted that there have been four activists who have died in incidents connected to the protest in recent days as well.

Looking at an article from Antonia Mortensen, I think she sums up an understanding of what is really happening here:

● (2245)

Ukraine is the biggest frontier nation separating Russia and the EU. Once part of the Soviet Union, the country gained its modern independence in 1991 following the fall of the Berlin Wall.

I think a lot of us do recognize and have heard about the Berlin Wall. That was in my younger days, but I still remember that. I still remember the importance of that and how Canadians were actually glued to their televisions learning about this.

Mortensen continues:

Since then, Ukraine has made an effort to move toward Western ideals when it comes to politics and human rights, but the nation is still ranked 144 out of 177 countries in Transparency International's corruptions index.

That is something to be mindful of. Mortensen then adds:

The Ukrainians who have taken to the streets in recent weeks say they want to see a better-governed, less corrupt and politically liberal country, more closely aligned with its western neighbours.

That is what we all hope for in a democracy, that we can actually have less corruption, that we can have accountability and transparency.

She continues by quoting someone else's piece on Ukraine:

People see a prosperous, well-governed EU next to their borders—in sharp contrast with their own economic and political misery. That's why they are on the streets now, in Kiev and elsewhere.

She notes:

Under Soviet rule, many Ukrainian farmers lost their lands and homes, and many ethnic Russians settled in the Ukraine. Under Soviet Rule the country's people their language and culture all suffered.

We can understand that, because we know what happened here in Canada with the first nations, Inuit and Métis people. We understand that there have been many challenges and much loss for these people.

She continues by quoting David Frum:

No nation suffered more from Soviet communism than the Ukrainians. Ukrainian farmers lost their lands and homes to Soviet collectivization....millions died in the man-made famine that followed...their language and culture were stunted under Moscow rule; their intellectuals and writers were suppressed, banished, murdered, and defamed.

We are seeing that even today, where some of the media are actually being suppressed so that there are not two sides to a story but only one side, the government's side. I think that is shameful.

Mortensen then states:

This caused a split which still exists in the Ukraine today, where a strong east-west divide remains, with the East of the nation being mostly Russian-speaking, with a large ethnic Russian population, and the West of the country being Ukrainian.

Ukraine's economy has been slow to follow its western neighbours who were also under Soviet control—Poland, for example, where the economy has grown exponentially.

Poland was not part of the USSR, but can say “also part of the Soviet Union or under Soviet control—for example, Poland, where the economy has grown exponentially.”

By contrast, Ukraine's economy has deteriorated further and has suffered its worst years since the fall of the Soviet Union.

Many Ukrainians hope that the EU deal would offer the chance of economic recovery.

This is where we are today. In a blog responding to the comments made, a variety of comments were made. In one of them by someone from the Ukraine, it says:

Quinton, I don't care less if there would be triumph for any other nation as a result of Ukraine's moving closer to the EU—this will be primarily a triumph for the Ukrainian people. If it happens (or rather when it happens) this will be an escape from the trap set by the Russian empire for the past four centuries. We do not expect economic assistance from the EU, the Ukrainian people expect that the proximity to the EU will help us to obtain dignity and achieve self-respect, which Russia wanted to destroy for centuries by famine, executions and humiliation of Ukrainians. The Ukrainian people demand the rule of law, less corruption and fair rules of the game in our country.

This is where we are today. It is about democracy. Canada should explore the possibility of international travel bans and asset freezes on those responsible for repressive measures and violent crack-downs.

We certainly hope that the government will act, should it need to act shortly.

• (2250)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, back in December when we had the take note debate, the deputy leader of the Liberal Party argued that we needed to focus on targeted sanctions and he provided solid, tangible examples of how we might be able to do that.

Once again, we are trying to emphasize the importance of targeted sanctions. Ultimately, we do not have to wait for other countries to come onside: Canada can in fact play a leadership role in itself and take action today.

Does the member believe conclusively that now is the time to take action? Does she agree that we do not have to wait for other countries throughout the world and that we can do it, even standing alone as one nation, and take targeted sanctions?

• (2255)

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, I thank the member for reminding us about the debate in December. I mentioned it a little while ago. It was at a time when we were celebrating the life of Nelson Mandela, a great leader who fought for democracy.

I mentioned at the end of my speech that we certainly should look at taking decisive action. It was part of the motion that we were looking at tabling prior to the one that was agreed upon. I mentioned

that we should explore the possibility of international travel bans and asset freezes.

We also have to take note and see what happens tomorrow at the meeting that is going to occur with Ashton. Hopefully there will be a resolve there. We always have to hope.

I would also like to mention a quote from the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, testifying to the foreign affairs committee in 2011, where they said:

Canada can help foster NGO sector development, especially groups working in the areas of human rights, education, and law reform, as a vibrant civil society is one of the best guarantors of Ukraine's long-term democratic evolution.

It is not like this was yesterday. This is dated 2011. Something should have been done a while back.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as tonight's interventions have shown, unfortunately, Ukraine is headed towards a civil war logic. We all hope that that can be avoided. However, the fact remains that Ukrainian democracy has been undermined, damaged and broken down for quite some time by corruption. Perhaps it is also important that Canadians know how to stop those who profited from that corruption from reaping its rewards here in Canada, to prevent them from laundering and recycling their dirty money here.

I would like to know how Canada can implement this policy.

Mrs. Carol Hughes: Mr. Speaker, first of all, the government needs to have a long-term plan to encourage democracy in Ukraine. As I mentioned earlier in this debate, many others have said that we should freeze government assets to ensure that they do not disappear.

We see a government that is trying to accumulate assets. I would like to say this in English, because it is a little easier for me. We definitely see a government that can purchase huge mansions for its own use in national and provincial parks. The government is keeping those riches to itself, rather than sharing them with its people. That is really important.

I ended up saying it in French.

[*English*]

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the discussion on Ukraine at this important and troubling juncture. Let me just say, for my Ukrainian friends.

[*Member speaks in Ukrainian language*].

I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Souris—Moose Mountain.

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Since we last met in the House in a special session to discuss Ukraine, in December of last year, the situation in this beleaguered country has indeed deteriorated significantly. The government of Viktor Yanukovich has become even more brutal and more authoritarian. Acts of repression and intimidation have become well-worn tactics of the administration and of the security services. The use of violence by the state against peaceful protestors has become routine and widespread. The free press, brave journalists, religious figures and democracy activists have been muzzled. Ukrainians have been beaten and kidnapped and some, indeed, have been killed.

Tonight, the people of Ukraine face off against a government that has squandered whatever fragment of legitimacy it might once have had. The Yanukovich government has brought this situation upon itself, exacerbating civil unrest by using thuggish strong-arm tactics to try to pull the protest movement apart and by ignoring parliamentary process to push through a new set of repressive and illegitimate laws designed to silence legitimate dissent and facilitate a crackdown. The brave people of Ukraine could not be expected to be docile and submissive in the face of such repression. Ukrainians are brave and determined people and they know how to endure unbelievable hardship and tyranny, as they demonstrated a long time ago during the Holodomor. They will not let their country creep toward tyranny and dictatorial rule.

This protest movement started off in early December as a reaction to the unpopular and last-minute decision by Viktor Yanukovich to reject an offer for closer association with Europe, an offer that would have benefited all Ukrainians. However, because of the government's disproportionate and unprovoked counterattack on the protestors and on the ideals they espouse, this movement has become something more. It is not only about Ukraine's relationship with Europe and the communities of western democracies; the protestors demand an accountable government that respects human rights and the rule of law. This movement is now spreading across the country, and its outcome will be decisive for the future of Ukraine.

On the evening of January 25, in talks between the government and Ukraine's main opposition leaders, Yanukovich offered two key opposition leaders the posts of prime minister and deputy prime minister in a government that he, Yanukovich, would continue to lead, along with some minor concessions whereby he agreed to amend, not repeal, the draconian anti-protest laws he had pushed through his parliament 10 days prior. The opposition leaders, Arseniy Yatsenyuk and Vitali Klitschko, rejected the offers, as they should. They rejected these offers because they constituted an attempt to co-opt the opposition, not accommodate it.

The opposition's demands are legitimate and they are clear. They are to release all citizens who have been detained by law enforcement bodies for participation in protest actions that followed adoption of the dictatorship laws on January 16, 2014; to pass a law that exempts from responsibility and guarantees absence of criminal responsibility in the future for participants in protests that took place after January 16, 2014; to invalidate the package of dictatorship laws, passed on January 16, which grossly violate the Ukrainian constitution and other long-established legal instruments and procedures; to begin the process of revising the Ukrainian constitution to better protect civil rights and liberties; and finally,

to dismiss the cabinet of ministers, so many of whom have had a direct hand in facilitating this crackdown against legitimate civil dissent.

I believe that Canada should support these calls for change and that we should encourage the Ukrainian government to re-engage in talks with the opposition on the basis of these principles. In this respect, I am encouraged by the news today that the United Nations will dispatch a mediator to Ukraine. In the meantime, the opposition and the Euromaidan movement need Canada's moral, political, diplomatic and material support, and they can count on it.

At the outset of the crisis on December 6, the Minister of Foreign Affairs travelled to Kiev. He expressed Canada's deep disappointment that the Ukrainian government had, in balking at implementing the measures necessary to sign an association agreement with the European Union, effectively suspended that country's path toward democratic development and economic prosperity, all at the hands, frankly, of Vladimir Putin and Russia. This was clearly not the wish of the Ukrainian people.

While in Kiev, the Minister of Foreign Affairs met with his Ukrainian counterpart, Leonid Kozhara, to express grave concerns about the Ukrainian government's crackdown on mass protests against its decision to suspend negotiations with the European Union.

● (2300)

The minister also visited Independence Square, where he personally met with many of the protesters. We saw that on television. People in the square chanted, "Thank you, Canada" and cheered when the minister arrived. Afterwards, the minister said:

The clear signals of the Ukrainian people have been broadcast around the world, and the most concerning and disappointing aspect has been the government's reaction to these peaceful protests. We will continue to stand with those Ukrainians that believe in freedom, democracy, human rights and the rule of law.

Canada sent more than two dozen election observers to Ukraine to monitor parliamentary byelections being held amid this crisis, on December 15, in five electoral districts where electoral fraud had invalidated the results of the nationwide parliamentary elections of 2012.

Through the end of December and into January, the Yanukovich government, seeing that the protesters in Kiev's Independence Square showed no signs of abandoning either their posts or their principles, could have taken this as a signal to begin negotiations with the opposition. He could have pulled police and interior ministry forces back from a confrontational posture. He could have taken steps to show that he had heard the will of the people and would respect and recognize a form of protest that had been both peaceful and popular.

Yanukovich did none of this. Instead, he ratcheted up the pressure. He maligned and defamed the opposition leadership. He loosened the reins on his security forces, and he enacted new repressive laws. This is when the beatings, the disappearances, and the killings began. In response, the protest movement spread, and while remaining remarkably restrained, naturally became more volatile in some quarters.

Yanukovych's justice minister threatened to impose a state of emergency. This is the state of affairs in Ukraine tonight. The international community is rightly concerned.

I have mentioned that the United Nations announced today that it will dispatch a mediator to Kiev. We shall see in the days ahead whether this initiative will produce positive results for the people of Ukraine. I certainly hope it does.

The European Union has condemned the government's excesses and has called for restraint. The United States has revoked the visas of Ukrainian authorities deemed to have had a hand in these acts of oppression. Like Canada, the U.S. has also said that all policy options for holding responsible those implicated in acts of violence and repression may remain on the table.

The Chairperson-in-Office of the OSCE, Swiss Foreign Minister Didier Burkhalter, has called on the Ukrainian authorities to do their utmost to prevent a further escalation of tension, to carry out investigations promptly, and to bring those responsible for the casualties and violence to justice.

NATO Secretary General Anders Fogh Rasmussen has pointed out that the Ukrainian government is ultimately responsible for protecting peaceful demonstrators and that a sovereign, independent, and stable Ukraine, firmly committed to democracy and the rule of law, is key to Euro-Atlantic security.

Whatever direction this crisis takes, the Ukrainian people should know that they can count on support from their friends in Canada. As evidence, Canada's embassy in Kiev has been engaged with the Maidan and with key opposition figures as well as with the government throughout this crisis.

Our diplomats have conducted spot checks and have maintained a visible presence at protest sites in a clear demonstration that Canada and the world is watching. No act of violence or oppression will go unnoticed or unaccounted for by Canada.

At the same time, our embassy has been closely coordinating positions, messaging, and diplomatic actions on the ground in Kiev with our American and European partners, all with a view to urging restraint while demanding accountability for the democratic will of the Ukrainian people.

Canada's \$20 million a year development assistance program in Ukraine is targeted towards supporting democratic civil society, instituting electoral reform, combatting corruption, and helping small and medium enterprises in Ukraine grow.

Since Ukraine's renewed independence in 1991, Canada has played a pioneering and influential role, promoting freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law in this important country with which Canadians share such deep historical, cultural, and people-to-people ties. That role will continue, especially in the midst of crisis.

The Government of Canada is determined to continue to assist the Ukrainian people in achieving their aspirations for a fully free and democratic society. They must know that they have our support. We share their values. We share their aspirations. Their struggle is our struggle.

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[Member spoke in Ukrainian]

• (2305)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, tonight I think members of the House are united, as we often are, because we are together, as Canadians, concerned, at a level that absolutely transcends our politics, with the plight of the people of Ukraine. We need to know that everything we can do as Canadians is put to bear for the cause of democracy and freedom so that the Ukrainian people, who had a reasonable expectation of being able to align themselves with the European Union, will not be pre-empted from that desire by something that does not represent their will, their concerns, and their desire to align themselves with democracy.

It is not quite midnight, but it is late. I would like to ask my hon. colleague, on behalf of those of us in the opposition benches here tonight, what we, as parliamentarians and Canadians united, can do to support those Ukrainians who want nothing more than what we enjoy here in Canada: the right of free speech, the right of democratic assembly, and the right to align themselves with the cause of democracy and freedom.

• (2310)

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, in response, I would say that we can do what we are doing now, which is standing up and loudly and clearly expressing the concerns of Canadians of Ukrainian descent, of which there are approximately 1.3 million, many of them in my riding, and Canadian Ukrainians across the country. We cannot stand by. There are measures we can take. We cannot take kinetic measures, such as invading Ukraine and measures like that, but we can certainly do other things. Those are all on the table. They do not necessarily play themselves out in public.

I go back to my previous life. When I was commanding an F-18 squadron in Europe, just before the wall fell, I took the members of my squadron on the ground to the Berlin Wall so that they could see why we were, in fact, deployed to Germany and why it was important that we, as Canadians, did what we were doing. There was silence. I cannot remember the name of the town. It was a little town in East Germany. It was dead silent. It was a town of about half a million people. We could hear dogs bark and the odd car, but it was otherwise silent. The place was virtually dead. That is what we cannot allow to happen in Ukraine.

We cannot be prepared to do it the way we were prepared to do it in central Europe at that time, but we can certainly do what we are doing today, which is standing up, loudly and clearly, and taking what measures we can, along with our allies, the Americans, the Europeans, and everybody else, to make it clear to Yanukovych and the thugs he works with and the thugs, frankly, he works for in other countries above his pay grade, that we will not stand for it. We will do whatever we can to make life better for the Ukrainian people.

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my colleague talk about the situation in Ukraine. We know that it has been fragile for quite some time, but over the last month and a half, we have seen greater violence. The situation has deteriorated considerably.

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One of the things that has really been at the heart of all of this is the Ukrainian people's desire to align with the European Union. I wonder if my colleague has any thoughts on what a trade agreement with the European Union would offer the Ukrainian people in freedom.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Mr. Speaker, that is a pertinent question, because that is the kind of thing we are trying to get to.

There is a crisis in Ukraine right now. If we can get the Ukrainian people beyond that by either moving Yanukovich to a higher level of understanding and decency, or frankly, by helping them move him aside, then the Ukrainian people can aspire to all of the things Europe enjoys and all of the things we enjoy in our trading relationships with Europe, the United States, and other countries. It is the kind of thing that will move the Ukrainian people forward. Trade is what makes commerce, industries, and economies work. It is crucial that we get past this crisis so that the Ukrainian people can enjoy the kind of economic and trade freedom that will help them prosper.

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is certainly a pleasure to add my voice to the many voices that have spoken today, many eloquently, putting forth the position of Canada and uniting in a common voice to indicate that what is currently happening in Ukraine is not acceptable and that there needs to be a change.

I truly feel that Ukraine is at a crossroads and at a turning point in its history. It is difficult to say exactly how it might turn out. We do know that those in authority will be meeting and discussing what needs to happen and what will be taking place.

Of course, the worst would be the imposition of force in a semblance of some sort of security and causing more deaths and injuries. It would be my hope and desire, and I am sure the desire of all in the House here, that those in authority will think long and hard in terms of where they are going. As Amnesty International said, they do not want to take Ukraine back 20 years or more from where it was. They want to take Ukraine forward to enjoy the rights and freedoms that we take for granted here in Canada and enjoy day by day.

The actions of the president, the government, and the security forces must be condemned loudly and unequivocally. I think that is what we are doing here, not only today but day by day, in response to the intimidation we have seen, the humiliation, the use of brutal force by Ukraine against its own people, who are assembling in a peaceful way to protest and express their views. That is fundamentally essential in a free and democratic society. I think what we are seeing is a culmination of a series of steps that have taken Ukraine to where it is today.

Of course, the trouble is that once one tastes of democracy, of freedom, it is difficult to take it away and it is hard to give up. The people of Ukraine have been in that place where they have tasted of freedom. They have tasted how democracy works.

I have been to Ukraine, as my colleagues have, on a number of occasions to monitor the elections that have taken place. There was a spirit of hope and aspiration. However, the steps that we have seen taken in the last while have suppressed these hopes, have suppressed these aspirations, and the people of Ukraine are not prepared to

accept that. They are standing up for forward progress, for their legitimate aspirations, and we must support them at every turn of the way.

A political system that is manipulated and orchestrated so that laws are passed in a hurry, and perhaps not in the way that they should be, to achieve an individual's result or for the benefit of a certain sector of society at the expense of the majority of the people is a problem. It goes against the very core of what we know is right.

I think there is a better way, and it is unfortunate that the better way was not taken. I truly feel that if individuals can express themselves, if their abilities can be used in an appropriate way, if there is due process so that one can do things without fear of intimidation or fear of suppression while knowing that the judiciary actually works, and if the fairness of the laws apply evenly and equally to everyone, the country would prosper.

The Ukraine had an opportunity, or perhaps we could say at the moment a missed opportunity, to sign an association agreement with the European Union. Ukraine, in failing to do that, missed an opportunity to further develop democracy and to ensure the prosperity of the country by setting in place some rules and regulations that business would know would be enforced. Those who wanted to invest in the country's great potential would have known that they could, and that they could expect the rule of law and due process to prevail. That opportunity was there, and it continues to be there in large measure. Western countries and European countries are prepared to work with Ukraine and invest quite heavily.

● (2315)

Instead, a comprehensive agreement was signed with Russia that has taken Ukraine back a number of years to the old ways, something that did not need to happen. What is worse, when the people took exception to that, when they peacefully assembled and demonstrated, the reaction was to pass really draconian laws that anyone could objectively say are anti-democratic and do not respect individual rights. I will just go through some of them to indicate the direction that was taken.

The state could decide to ban Internet access. Maybe in days past things could have been done in a corner, but in today's society where we have the Internet, television, and cameras, and telephones that take pictures, things are not done in the corner and we can see live action, so the authorities try to suppress that. Today's society is remarkable. I would urge this type of action not be taken.

Criminalization for libel and targeting of the media for criticizing government officials was another law, with sentences of up to two years in jail. That is remarkable. Moreover, the blocking of government buildings could result in a sentence of up to five years in jail. The unauthorized installation of tents, stages and sound equipment could result in up to 15 days' arrest for someone doing something that is fundamentally their right to do.

A group of more than five cars driving together requires permission from the ministry of interior affairs, otherwise the drivers face a loss of licence and vehicle for up to two years. Imagine that: five vehicles driving in a row is considered offensive.

A broad definition of extremist activities adopted prevents NGOs and churches from engaging in the support of civil protests.

The Canadian Ambassador for Religious Freedom observed that the Ukrainian culture minister has threatened to delist the Ukrainian Greek Catholic church as a legal body if its priests continue to publicly pray with the protestors. Can anyone remember the last time that churches were delisted as entities? We know when that was, and it is a very regressive position to take. How can the people of Ukraine stomach a law like that? How can anyone impose a law like that? It must be challenged. It must be reversed. Reason must prevail.

MPs may be stripped of immunity by a simple majority vote in Ukraine's parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, thereby allowing the initiation of criminal proceedings, detention or arrest, with such cases no longer requiring prior review by the relevant parliamentary committee. When election rules can be changed, when opposition members can be put in jail because of the position they take, where is the country headed? A number of political prisoners really ought to be released, because when we look at the process that put them there, when we look at the weight of the law the president placed upon them, a quick look would say this cannot be right.

Another law indicated that NGOs that accept foreign funds must include in their title the term "civic organization that fulfills the functions of a foreign agent".

Those kinds of actions are regressive and go back to an era and a time we would like to forget.

Of course, we have seen a protestor killed. A funeral was held for a 25-year old who paid the ultimate price.

The deliberate beating of protestors and journalists, kidnappings and disappearances, people falling off tall buildings are the kinds of things one would expect in a very regressive and totalitarian regime. The use of deadly force, physical assaults, home visits, requests for statements, and censorship are the kinds of things that cannot be tolerated.

I probably will not have time to mention an article in the *Daily Herald*, in which a young person who came to Canada decries what is happening. Two fellow students, one a poet and one going to university, were arrested for protesting and put in jail. How is that appropriate in a democracy? It is not.

● (2320)

I would encourage the Ukrainian people to continue to stand for that which is right, at this very critical moment in history.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened closely to my Conservative colleague's speech as well as the previous one.

It is important to take stock. I also picked up on some bombastic rhetoric about the strength of the Ukrainian people. That is a good thing, but right now, beyond tonight's legitimate and crucial emergency debate, we need to acknowledge the cruel reality that Canada must live within its means, which have been severely restricted by the government.

The response capability that Canada once had, through government representatives and the staff of Foreign Affairs Canada, has

been greatly weakened. What is more, Canada has now excluded itself from the UN, resulting in a staggering loss of influence.

I would like to know how my colleague believes we can make a difference, given that we are now living with the consequences of these political choices from another time that have greatly restricted our power to act?

● (2325)

[*English*]

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, first and foremost, the kinds of actions that I talked about must be condemned categorically. There is no question on that.

Second, Canada has to work with its allies and look at the options that are available. Today we have heard a number of options that are available for Canada to take, and Canada has said it will take them.

I know that the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, along with its president Paul Grod, has actually done an admirable job in identifying what is happening on almost a day-by-day basis, informing parliamentarians, but also suggesting the kinds of things that the Ukrainian community in Canada would like to see happen, and some of the options are very realistic.

It is a range of options. We heard them today. I will not go through all of them. Many of the opposition members have actually asked that we undertake those options. However, it is the kind of thing that is put into a basket for those who are dealing with the situation on an immediate basis to make a decision. I would prefer to leave it in the hands of our foreign minister, in the hands of our Prime Minister, in concert with other allies, to take precisely the kind of action they feel is appropriate, under the circumstances, at the immediate moment that it needs to be taken. I would trust their judgment on this because I know where they stand. I know the statements they have made. They have been very public about them. They have been very straightforward and sincere about them. I would expect that the actions they take would be in the best interest not only of Ukraine but of Canada as well.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, if I may, I will just put to the member a question that was put to the government earlier today, in question period, by the deputy leader of the Liberal Party and ask him to respond as to how he would have answered the question. The question is this. Beyond general statements about considering options with respect to Yanukovich, will Canada specifically, one, send official observers to scrutinize what is going on, two, provide expedited visas to any victims who need to leave that country for their own safety, and three, target Yanukovich and his crowd with personal sanctions, asset freezes and travel bans, for example, to push them to stop their anti-democratic behaviour?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Speaker, if I recall correctly, the member who put the question in question period was the member for Wascana.

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In fact, when I look at the recommendations made by Mr. Paul Grod, president of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, I see he listed a number of suggestions of actions that could be taken. Of course, the ambassador of religious freedom is in Ukraine almost as we speak. The very specific types of actions that the member for Wascana put forward are the types of actions that have been listed by the Ukrainian Canadian Congress and are taken into consideration by the foreign minister and the Prime Minister, in concert with the allies, to decide what actions will be taken. I think that is totally appropriate. That is exactly what I would do.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, to pick up on the last statement by the member which says “in concert with the allies”, we would encourage and expect the government to work with the allies to see what sort of common ground can be found and actions taken. What the government seems to be missing is the potential leadership role that we as a nation could be playing. We would appeal to the government to reflect on the fact that there is a role for Canada to play unilaterally if need be. We have suggested that and been talking about that for weeks now.

First, I would like to give a bit of an outline. Our Canadian Ukrainian community today is estimated at over 1.2 million people. I have heard it is 1.3 million. There should be absolutely no doubt whatsoever that there is a great deal of interest throughout Canada in what is happening in the Ukraine. It goes much further than individuals of Ukrainian heritage. They see and hear what is taking place. They want the Government of Canada to demonstrate strong leadership on this issue. Many are watching this evening, reading the newspapers and they are following it on the Internet. They are looking for leadership on the issue.

We have a parliamentary friendship group. It might be appropriate for the parliamentary friendship group to have an emergency meeting, to see if we can come up with some ideas that might be able to assist the House. As a vice-chair of that committee, I would be more than happy to be part of that discussion. I would encourage the chair and other members to see if we could convene sometime this week and hopefully generate some ideas and thoughts.

In December, we thought about having an emergency debate. However, at the time it was felt that we would have a take note debate, which is fairly similar to what we are doing this evening. That take note debate received the support of all parties. I participated in the full take note debate. It is interesting that there is a bit of a change now. I found that during the take note debate there was a lot more discussion in terms of what was physically taking place in the Ukraine.

I think this started around November 20 or 21. We had an EU association deal, of sorts, that was not being signed off, no doubt for a number of reasons. The people of the Ukraine responded rapidly to the concerns they had with respect to the general move and the failure of the president to recognize the valuable role that the European Union could potentially play for the Ukraine.

Most people would acknowledge that Russia no doubt has a role to play in the Ukraine's future. However, the European Union has a role to play. The people of the Ukraine want to see that take place. There was a great deal of discussion about that in the take note debate.

The Ukraine is a sovereign nation that has gone through a great deal. Canada is a very young nation. However, as a nation, the Ukraine has endured. The people of the Ukraine have always fought for their identity and want to preserve it.

● (2330)

Ukrainians have gone through some pretty horrific times. Members often talk about the Holodomor and the genocide that took place. When I was in Kiev two years ago, two things came out. One was a very touching moment. When I went to the Holodomor museum, I saw an older gentleman leaving the museum with tears in his eyes. He was obviously deeply affected. He was probably in his late eighties at the time. It was a very touching moment both for me and for my daughter, who had witnessed that and who ultimately went on to the museum.

Among the people I talked to, one was a parliamentarian, but in other individuals there was a great deal of optimism and debate and discussion about the European Union and the possibility of future prosperity for Ukraine through building bridges and building better agreements. We need to understand that what took place in November shattered the dreams of many in Ukraine, and as the days followed, we found that the whole issue of democracy, basic freedoms, and the rule of law were all being challenged.

The people of Ukraine responded. I was in Independence Square in Kiev. It was huge, but very confined with all the large buildings around it, and I could imagine the thousands of people who started to take to the street in protest.

They are entitled. They have earned that entitlement to be able to express themselves in whatever way they can to demonstrate that the basic rule of law, basic freedoms, and democracy are worth fighting for.

As the campaign continued, here in Ottawa we recognized the needs and what the people of Ukraine were saying and how our constituents were responding to what was happening in Ukraine. I am not alone; I am sure that virtually all members of the House would have been contacted, whether by individuals of Ukrainian heritage or by the Ukrainian Canadian Congress or by other stakeholders who were genuinely concerned and wanted Canada to take some action, to do something.

I recall that debate vividly, because not only did the member for Wascana stand and give his speech, but he also talked about the idea of targeted sanctions. We talked about the leadership role that Canada could play, but even in the questions that followed, the member for Wascana continued to push on that particular point. I happened to follow the member and did likewise, perhaps not quite as eloquently, but we recognized it.

It was not just members of the Liberal Party back then who were talking about that measure: Canadians were talking about it. I have had the privilege of meeting with a number of people of Ukrainian heritage, and in a very tangible way they gave me a better understanding of the issues facing Ukraine.

• (2335)

I make reference to my good friend Borys Wrzesnewskij. As an individual, he has been a valuable resource to the Liberal Party caucus in making sure that we are kept up to date with what is taking place in Ukraine through websites and posts on Facebook. We appreciate that, not only for ourselves, but for other Canadians.

He is not alone. There are many others. My colleague from Toronto Centre wrote a wonderful editorial piece in *The Globe and Mail* today. I would recommend that people take the time to read it.

If I could steal one of her sentences, she said, “In Ukraine, we are seeing the struggle for human dignity, for the rule of law, for freedom of expression and association in its clearest form”.

That is really what we are witnessing. We see the images, and there are so many. With the Internet and world media and the role they play, the Ukrainian government will not be able to hide from what is taking place. I have seen footage on the Internet, through YouTube and news networks, and what is happening to protesters is absolutely cruel.

Earlier, I had my assistant pull something from the Internet. It was a report from the CBC. I would like to make quick reference to two parts of this report. It says:

Thousands of Ukrainians chanted “Hero!” and sang the national anthem on Sunday, as a coffin carrying a protester who was killed in last week’s clashes with police was carried through the streets of the capital, underscoring the rising tensions in the country’s two-month political crisis.

We have people dying in Ukraine. They are dying because of a government that is not responding to some of the fundamental rights that the people of Ukraine deserve to have and be honoured with.

The article goes on to say “demonstrators tried to storm a local administration building, but police drove them back with water sprayed from a fire truck in subfreezing temperatures...”

This is what I mean when I say that cruelty is taking place. It needs to stop. There needs to be some sort of accountability for what is taking place and for those who are imposing these sorts of actions. If people want to tune in to local news or go on the Internet, they can do Google or YouTube searches and witness this cruelty first-hand.

We have all had opportunities to engage the community as whole, but particularly individuals of Ukrainian heritage from our communities who are trying their very best to make sure the Government of Canada is doing whatever it possibly can to make a difference. I was at a Winnipeg rally, which I made reference to before. I know there were other rallies. I believe the member for Toronto Centre was at a rally in Toronto. These rallies are taking place because we in Canada want the people of Ukraine to know that we care, that we are following what is taking place and that we do not like what we are seeing.

• (2340)

There are petitions being circulated and signed by hundreds and thousands. If we had electronic petitioning, I would suggest that hundreds of thousands of people would be signing these petitions.

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A special mention should go to the Ukrainian Canadian Congress for the phenomenal effort it is making, whether at the national or regional level.

In the local communities, a number of individuals from different Ukrainian organizations have communicated with me. I am grateful for that. It is not only the organizations.

Last Thursday when I was having lunch at Wendy’s, I looked to my right because I overheard a young man talking to a lady across from him while showing her his iPhone, which was obviously showing a clip of what was happening in Ukraine.

Someone came to one of my weekly meetings. I have her email here, because I asked her to send it to me with her comments. She, Libid Zyla Harder, said that she would love to see Canada offer refuge for new dissidents, the persecuted protestors, independent journalists, and their respective families.

I hosted a lunch on Sunday in my constituency. We had maybe 150-plus individuals, the vast majority, maybe 90%, who might have been of Ukrainian heritage. One table in particular had a group of young people who picked up on the same point, that we needed to look at how we might be able to assist through refuge or special visas. People have ideas, and there are things that we can do.

I posed a question to the last speaker. It would be nice to get a very straightforward answer. Today in question period the deputy leader of the Liberal Party posed the following question to the government:

Beyond general statements about considering options with respect to Yanukovich, will Canada specifically, one, send official observers to scrutinize what is going on; two, provide expedited visas to any victims who need to leave that country for their own safety; and three, target Yanukovich and his crowd with personal sanctions, asset freezes, and travel bans, for example, to push them to stop their anti-democratic behaviour?

I do believe, and we in the Liberal Party believe, that Canada has a leadership role to play and does not have to wait for other countries. Yes, we work with other countries, but we can play a leadership role in putting in targeted sanctions, a leadership role on the whole issue of immigration and through Citizenship and Immigration assist in a very tangible way.

That is the challenge that we put to the government, starting back in December. I want to conclude really simply and say that the challenge for the government is to demonstrate strong leadership here.

• (2345)

We can go alone. Yes, we can work with other governments throughout the world, but we can go alone if need be, and we believe that the need is now. We do not have to wait. My final appeal to the government is that we can act now, and I would challenge it to do just that.

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• (2350)

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member mentioned the Canada-Ukraine Friendship Group. I am the chair. He may have noticed that this is an emergency debate that my colleague from Selkirk—Interlake co-sponsored with me this evening. In fact, being the vice-chair of the Canada-Ukraine Friendship Group, he has spoken this evening. The other vice-chair, the member for Parkdale—High Park, has spoken this evening. Other members of the Canada-Ukraine Friendship Group have also spoken this evening.

I would remind the member that the Ukrainian community will be having a very large gathering outside the House of Commons on Wednesday at noon, and I would expect the hon. member to be there to address that crowd and to take his position as the vice-chair of the Canada-Ukraine Friendship Group.

I would also like to remind the member that in the past, the third party has had a very poor record on defending human rights when it came to the Soviet Union, Cuba, China, and other places. Our government has stood up for them.

The Prime Minister has made very strong statements about what is going on in Ukraine. The foreign affairs minister has been there himself. He has walked the Maidan. I twice walked the Maidan in December when I was there. My former CUPP interns took me on a very intimate tour of the Maidan.

We are working intimately with our allies, because that is what a responsible government does. That is what a responsible country does. It coordinates. It is precise. By being imprecise, by going it alone, as the member would like to say, we could miss something, and the people who are harmed at the end of the day are going to be the little people in Ukraine. It is the ordinary people that would pay the price for an imprecise response from this government.

The member is, quite frankly, mistaken about the course of action he is recommending. This government is working very diligently. We stand with the people of Ukraine. We stand with the opposition, and we are going to fight very hard to help Ukrainians aspire to the freedom, democracy, human rights, justice, and economic options that country desires for itself.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member's comments with regard to the Canada-Ukraine Friendship Group. I am one of the vice-chairs. As I suggested, it would be appropriate for us to get together, possibly before Wednesday or after, even if it is for a brief discussion on other thoughts and ideas. Maybe something can be done, for example, for observers. Is there something we can encourage? After all, there are representatives from all political parties.

With regard to standing alone, let me discuss a quote posted on Facebook. I suggest that this is something we could actually do on our own. It talks about a special, expedited, and no-cost visa regime for injured protesters so that they can be treated in Canada. Protestors have been removed from hospitals by police only to be dumped outside the forest. There are family members of killed protesters and family members of protest organizers. As the situation develops, that list could, in fact, expand.

These are things we could do. We do not necessarily have to have the blessings of other governments in the world to move forward on this. That is why I say that what we really want is for the Government of Canada to play a stronger, more proactive leadership role in dealing with some of these issues.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I agree with my Conservative colleagues who said in their speeches that Canada's main focus is to find a peaceful and democratic solution in Ukraine.

We do not want to add fuel to the fire. We definitely do not want to see a repeat of the horrors in Hungary, where publicity-hungry politicians encouraged Hungarians to revolt and then did nothing when the U.S.S.R. brutally cracked down on citizens. We cannot allow that to happen again.

Encouraging an international solution is a measured and intelligent response. We do not want to add fuel to the fire, but that does not stop the Canadian government from taking measures to stop those who are using Canada to launder money they stole in Ukraine. It does not stop the government from supporting the people who are knocking at our door, trying to get a visa to protect their family from indiscriminate repression.

However, I would like to know when the member from Manitoba will understand that Canada's role in this situation is not to beat the drums and fire the guns, but to truly help the people in Ukraine find a peaceful solution.

• (2355)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I am not sure if the member is consistent with other members of his political party. I was under the impression that the NDP did support targeted sanctions. Even the member's own critic for foreign affairs and numerous other members commented on that, so he might be a very small minority within his own caucus. However, I will let him deal with that.

For me, having targeted sanctions and Canada playing a leadership role would be of great benefit. It would not be the first time Canada played a very strong leadership role with respect to Ukraine, to give credit to a Progressive Conservative government in its recognition of Ukraine during its independence.

I would suggest to the member that we not underestimate the potential contribution Canada can make. No one wants to see additional loss of life in Ukraine. What we want to see is peace and harmony, but also freedom of speech, rule of law, democracy and so forth.

Mr. James Bezan (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Defence, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as this is my last chance to get up today, I want to thank all of my colleagues for participating in tonight's debate, for raising awareness, for condemning the Yanukovich regime and the brutality that has been taking place on the streets of Kiev and so many other communities, and letting the people of Ukraine, as well as Ukrainian Canadians, know that we stand in solidarity with them. It was important earlier today that we pass the motion unanimously. That goes a long way in rattling the cages over in Kiev.

We know that tomorrow the Ukrainian parliament, the Verkhovna Rada, will be having a debate. I know that some of their discussions today fell apart again, but at least they are talking. We want to make sure that those discussions continue and, more importantly, that the Yanukovich government and the parliamentarians, the party of regions and the Communist party that supported this resolution that brought in place the draconian martial law that we see today, do the right thing and in good faith repeal that legislation, regardless of where those negotiations stand.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, to join the member in concluding on a very positive note, I say that we acknowledge and want what the people of Ukraine want. The House of Commons today is prepared to speak out in support of the people of Ukraine and respond to the hundreds of thousands of Canadians who want us to take action. All of us will take action where we best can.

S. O. 52

I do appreciate that we had the emergency debate today. It was the right thing to do. We wish nothing but the best for the future of Ukraine.

• (2400)

The Deputy Speaker: It being midnight, I declare that the motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted.

[*Translation*]

Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until later this day at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 12 a.m.)

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