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OFFICIAL REPORT
(HANSARD)

Wednesday, February 26, 2014

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, February 26, 2014

The House met at 2 p.m.

Prayers

•(1405)

[*English*]

The Speaker: It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of the national anthem led by the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*Translation*]

UKRAINE

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, last fall, former president Viktor Yanukovich decided to reject an agreement that would bring Ukraine closer to the European Union. Instead, he chose to strengthen ties with Russia.

Pro-European protests ensued. Since then, the protests have turned into a grassroots uprising against government corruption and totalitarianism. After the president fled, the heroine of the Orange Revolution, Yulia Tymoshenko, was released from custody. It is an initial gesture of openness, but the people of Ukraine will need to remain vigilant during the fragile lead-up to the next presidential election on May 25.

In the meantime, Canada must ensure that the international community prosecutes those who violate human rights and also that Ukraine is respectfully supported, without interference, during its future democratic steps towards what we hope will be renewed political, social and economic stability. The coming weeks will be critical as Ukraine moves towards holding free elections and restoring regional stability. Canada must offer intelligent support that is designed to protect the Ukrainian people and their democratic institutions.

[*English*]

ROTARY CLUBS

Mr. Lawrence Toet (Elmwood—Transcona, CPC): Mr. Speaker, one of the privileges of being a member of Parliament is the opportunity to connect with organizations that aim to improve the world and their local communities.

This past Sunday was International Rotary Day. The Rotary was founded in Chicago on February 23, 1905, and has grown to 1.2 million members. These professionals, with diverse backgrounds and perspectives, collaborate to inspire a better future for all.

In 1910, Winnipeg put Rotary on the international map as the first city outside of the United States to establish a rotary club.

My riding of Elmwood—Transcona is home to two very active clubs: Rotary club of Winnipeg-Transcona, and Rotary Club of Winnipeg East AM. Members of these clubs are extraordinary volunteers, who conduct projects, from helping families in their own communities to working toward a polio-free world. The Rotarians of Elmwood—Transcona are selfless, and their contributions are invaluable.

It gives me great pleasure to celebrate the hard work they do to make our world a better place.

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[*Translation*]

PINK SHIRT DAY

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am wearing pink today in honour of Pink Shirt Day to show my support for young Canadians taking action to prevent bullying. Since being elected, I have emphasized the importance of prevention in dealing with cyberbullying.

Last spring, the Conservatives introduced their only cyberbullying bill. It was a 70-page brick, but only three of those pages dealt with bullying, which is an insult to all victims of that kind of abuse.

We know that criminalizing bullying will not help the victims. It is time the Conservatives did the right thing to protect our young people, and that means coming up with a national anti-bullying strategy.

I would like to end on a hopeful note. The fact is that 80% of bullying incidents occur before witnesses. In 57% of the cases where a third person speaks up for the victims, the bully stops bullying within 10 seconds. Please, let us not be silent witnesses. We can help.

Statements by Members

[English]

WINTER CLASSIC HOCKEY TOURNAMENT

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on February 17, which was Family Day in Ontario, the Applewood Hockey Association and the Streetsville Hockey League hosted their 4th Annual Winter Classic hockey tournament at Chic Murray Arena, in Mississauga.

Both organizations share deep roots in Mississauga. The Applewood Hockey Association is celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, and the Streetsville Hockey League has been providing hockey programs since 1946.

Tyke, Minor Novice, Novice, Atom, Pee Wee, and Minor Midget teams, from both sides, competed on the ice in the frigid cold.

This event was an excellent opportunity to showcase the outstanding hockey development programs that both organizations have to offer.

Congratulations to the participants, parents, and the organizing committee, namely Chris Loreto, Wendy and Brian Webster, Neil Painchaud, Stephane Angers, and Mark Zizek, for their work and dedication to the development of hockey in Canada. I truly enjoyed this event.

It is because of grassroots organizations that Canada continues to lead the world in hockey.

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PINK SHIRT DAY

Hon. Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is the seventh annual Pink Shirt Day, an international anti-bullying campaign begun in Nova Scotia when a young man was bullied for wearing a pink shirt to school.

Two fellow students began distributing pink shirts to stand up for him and to take a stand against the act of bullying.

All of us in this House know that everyone in this country has been touched by bullying, and unfortunately far too many people have seen the devastating effects it can have.

Whether it is at school, in the workplace, or online, bullying is a very serious problem that cannot be tolerated.

I want to acknowledge the hard work of Joe Killorn, a Pink Shirt Day coordinator on Prince Edward Island, who has done so much to raise awareness and to get communities involved throughout the province.

I also want to encourage everyone across the country to join our many communities, to show that we can help raise awareness and put a stop to this harmful act of bullying.

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● (1410)

BRUCE POWER

Mr. Ben Lobb (Huron—Bruce, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Bruce Power is the largest employer in Huron—Bruce, employing over 3,700 full-time staff. It is the largest nuclear power plant in the

world, with eight functioning reactors. It is also Canada's largest private–public partnership. In 2013, it sold electricity at a cost of 6¢ per kilowatt hour, versus the provincial average of 8.5¢. That is 30% below the provincial average. It also provides 30% of Ontario's power, making it one of the most efficient and cost-effective means for power generation in the country.

Through direct and indirect employment, nuclear energy in Canada provides for almost 75,000 full-time jobs.

I would like to welcome Bruce Power to Ottawa this week for the Canadian Nuclear Association's annual conference and trade show. I hope my colleagues in the House have a chance to visit the Weston Hotel to learn more about this vibrant and reliable industry.

Keep up the good work at the Bruce so we can keep the lights on.

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[Translation]

ANGÈLE ARSENAULT

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I learned of the death of Angèle Arsenault, the great francophone and Acadian singer from Prince Edward Island.

Her singing career began in 1963, in Moncton. She quickly became an ambassador for Prince Edward Island's Acadian community. Inspired by Acadia, her album *Libre* sold over 300,000 copies in 1978. Ms. Arsenault touched the Acadian community not only of Prince Edward Island, but of Acadia as a whole. Her song *Grand Pré* became a legacy for all Acadians, as it tells the story of the struggles my people have faced.

I will remember Ms. Arsenault with her round glasses and her big smile, sitting at her piano and singing her catchy tunes, such as *De temps en temps moi j'ai les bleus*, *Moi j'mange* and *Y'a une étoile pour vous*. Like a star herself, Angèle Arsenault shone on Acadia and throughout the French-speaking world. Despite her passing, she continues to shine thanks to the great musical legacy she leaves behind.

Acadia will miss you, Angèle.

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[English]

SEARCH AND RESCUE VOLUNTEERS

Mr. James Lunney (Nanaimo—Alberni, CPC): Mr. Speaker, across coastal B.C., thousands of volunteers train hard, sacrifice their own time, and put themselves at risk when someone is missing or in peril. It was September 2012 when the Alberni Valley Rescue Squad was called out when our personal outdoor excursion on Mount Arrowsmith went wrong. Two members of our group were in trouble, and darkness was descending.

Budget 2014 would provide a volunteer search and rescue tax credit. It would benefit qualifying members of teams, such as the Nanaimo, the Mount Arrowsmith, and the Alberni Valley, as well as the West Coast Inland Search and Rescue Society and the Royal Canadian Marine Search and Rescue squads.

I want to pay a special tribute to Mark Livingstone. A professional with our MCTS centre in Ucluelet, he was the driving force in establishing Coast Guard Auxiliary Unit 38. Mark's passion was safety of life at sea. The more rough it was, the more likely it would be to find him on the water directing SAR efforts. Tragically, Mark passed away in an industrial accident in 2007.

I am sure that all members would like to join me in thanking all of our search and rescue volunteers for their selfless service.

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CANADIAN DELEGATION TO ISRAEL

Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, recently I was honoured to join the Prime Minister on his first official trip to Israel, the West Bank, and Jordan. I was joined by community leaders from my riding of Winnipeg South Centre for this historic trip. That group included members of our community who lead the Arab–Israeli dialogue and who serve local and Israeli universities, business and community leaders, and leaders who fight anti-Semitism.

I admire the principles of our Prime Minister to stand with a country that shares our values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. His historic speech in the Knesset has been showcased and valued by many people from my community.

Being in a Jordanian refugee camp, and at a border crossing from Syria into Jordan when hundreds were fleeing, made me value this government's leadership and Canada's leadership throughout the Middle East.

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CANADA POST

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I and my colleague from Vancouver East recently hosted a community town hall to hear our constituents' views about Canada Post's plan to end home delivery and double the price of stamps. A standing-room-only crowd attended and expressed unanimous opposition to these misguided moves.

Our constituents told us that ending home delivery and raising stamp costs hurts seniors and those individuals with mobility challenges. It will damage small businesses and destroy 8,000 well-paying jobs. It eliminates letter carriers, who are the eyes and ears in our communities and who report suspicious activity and emergencies in our neighbourhoods.

The constituents expressed concern about the superboxes that will increase mail theft and car traffic, create litter, and decrease property values.

They told us that a strong public post office is good for our economy, good for taxpayers, and good for our communities. They wanted us to ask a question: If every government since 1867 could manage to provide home mail delivery to Canadians, why are the Conservatives incapable of doing so?

Statements by Members

● (1415)

CANADIAN HERITAGE

Mrs. Nina Grewal (Fleetwood—Port Kells, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate Telefilm Canada, the sponsors, organizers, and volunteers, and the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages on another successful movie at the National Arts Centre as the minister showcased the excellent and moving film *Gabrielle*.

Our government is proud to sponsor the Canadian film industry and the entire audiovisual production sector. Annually, we invest over \$600 million in the audiovisual sector, and on Monday our government signed a new audiovisual co-production treaty with India. This treaty will stimulate foreign investment and create new business opportunities and jobs. The agreement is yet another demonstration of our support for the Canadian audiovisual industry, making Canada an even better place to do business.

I thank the Minister of Canadian Heritage and Official Languages for her strong leadership in supporting our audiovisual industry.

* * *

TAXATION

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government's plan for income splitting will cost the federal budget about \$3 billion a year out of a painfully achieved surplus. It is a regressive and inefficient tax expenditure that simply does not benefit a staggering 86% of Canadian families. It also increases income and gender inequality. The CD Howe Institute has confirmed it will do more harm than good.

While the Conservatives may say they want to create jobs, its plan is a very strong disincentive for the lower-income spouse to work. Sadly, since women in Canada earn, on average, 19% less than men, the lower-income earner will usually be the woman. Conservatives, like the Liberals before them, are increasing inequality.

New Democrats are committed to all Canadian families, not just the richest among us.

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TIM HORTONS

Mr. Terence Young (Oakville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Tim Hortons, the maker of Canada's favourite cup of coffee, says it sees “significant room for growth” in its core Canadian business. Thanks to our low tax plan, Canadians have more money in their pockets for the small pleasures every Canadian enjoys and now they will have 500 more locations to enjoy them in.

This week, the company announced it expects to add approximately 255 restaurants this year, for a total of 500 locations in Canada and 300 in the United States by 2018, and to “double-double” the good economic news for this Canadian success story, it has reported initial success in the Persian Gulf region and has a road map for adding about 220 locations in that area over the same period.

Oral Questions

Tim Hortons currently has 3,588 restaurants in its Canadian system, 859 in the United States, and 38 in the Gulf region. What a great Canadian success story.

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INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE ALLIANCE

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to recognize the completion of Canada's year as chair of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance and to congratulate our former colleague, Dr. Mario Silva, on his superb work representing our country as chair.

Dr. Silva stated yesterday:

The IHRA brings political and social leaders together from around the world to help prevent future human rights abuses through Holocaust education, remembrance, and research. I am proud of Canada's leadership on the world stage...

The Holocaust is an unparalleled evil in human history. Remembrance and education are critical parts of ensuring these events are never repeated. As well, we must act upon the lessons of the Holocaust in preventing mass atrocity and genocide, and bringing the perpetrators of such crimes to justice.

In the words of Nobel Peace Prize winner and Holocaust survivor Elie Wiesel, "For the dead and the living, we must bear witness".

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● (1420)

AFGHAN VETERANS

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Afghan mission has been the most consequential conflict that Canada's military has faced since the Korean War. It has come at a price. One hundred and fifty-eight brave Canadians have made the ultimate sacrifice combatting the spread of terrorism. This evening, the House will vote on a motion put forth by my colleague, the hon. member for Palliser, calling for a national Afghan memorial.

I call on all members to stand with the government and seize this opportunity to proudly honour this commitment to recognize the strength and sacrifice of Canada's Afghan veterans and their families, ensuring that they will never be forgotten.

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[Translation]

PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

Ms. Ève Pécelet (La Pointe-de-l'Île, NDP): Mr. Speaker, a few years ago, before they were corrupted by power, the Conservative members were principled. That was then. Now they are having to defend the free lunches that PMO staffers are getting.

We are not talking about handing out a carton of milk and an apple to people who have nothing to eat. We are talking about a bunch of privileged people who create scandals and then try to hide the truth. I wonder how they feel when they look in the mirror and realize they have become just like David Dingwall, defending their entitlements. They came to Ottawa saying they wanted to change things, but it is Ottawa that changed them.

In a single day in June 2012, the one and only Nigel Wright ordered \$5,000 worth of pizza on the taxpayers' dime for Conservative employees. There is nothing too good for the working class. While the Conservatives continue to use taxpayers' money like it is their own, the NDP will fight this kind of waste and stand up for Canadians.

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[English]

ANTI-BULLYING DAY

Mrs. Cathy McLeod (Kamloops—Thompson—Cariboo, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is national Anti-Bullying Day.

While bullying has always existed, modern technology gives bullies the ability to humiliate and intimidate their victims in front of the entire world.

As recent tragedies have shown, cyberbullying has the power to destroy lives and communities. That is why our government has introduced legislation to crack down on cyberbullies and to stand up for victims.

The protecting Canadians from online crime bill will ensure that children are better protected by making it an offence to distribute intimate images without the consent of the person depicted. We have always been clear that there is a point where bullying goes beyond just words and becomes criminal behaviour.

Distributing images of a person against his or her will should be a crime, which is why we are acting to strengthen the Criminal Code. We are also acting to modernize the law so that police have the tools they need to better investigate these offences.

I hope the NDP will begin working with us so we can get the bill to the justice committee and hopefully passed into law as quickly as possible.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

ETHICS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, last week the member of Parliament for Nepean—Carleton had an unelected senator, who is deeply involved in the Wright-Duffy Senate expense scandal, headline for him at a fundraiser.

Is this what the Prime Minister expects of his minister of democratic reform?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I think the minister of democratic reform is doing an excellent job, including on the fair elections act.

Oral Questions

I note that yesterday the Leader of the Opposition, asking about that act, asserted that 73% of seniors use the voter ID card. That statistic is not true. That is true in residences, but in residences there are multiple other IDs available. Elections Canada will actually, in many cases, move ballot boxes room to room.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, just because the Senate Liberals are still fundraising for their party does not make it okay.

Deloitte auditors have been unable to explain how confidential information about their findings wound up in the Prime Minister's Office.

Was it Senator Tkachuk who told the Prime Minister's Office that the Deloitte audit would not make a finding on the question of Mike Duffy's residency?

• (1425)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the auditors themselves have addressed this question. The auditors themselves have confirmed that the audit was handled with the utmost confidentiality and no rules were broken.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the question was: what did Senator Tkachuk tell his office? Of course, Deloitte does not know about that. He does.

[Translation]

New Deloitte documents reveal that last March, Conservative Senator Tkachuk asked the auditor whether Mike Duffy was co-operating with the investigation. The following day, Mike Duffy said that he would no longer co-operate with the investigation.

What did Senator Tkachuk report to the Prime Minister's Office that led to this change the following day?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the leader of the NDP is referring to a letter between the senator, who was chair of the committee at the time, and the auditors. This is a question for the Senate.

* * *

[English]

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this is not the Conservative's first draft of the unfair elections act. An earlier version was presented to the Conservative caucus and rejected. Why?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, once again, as I said, the leader of the NDP keeps making inaccurate statements about the Elections Act.

Yesterday, he made inaccurate statements about trying to claim 73% of senators use voter identification cards, and that is not the case. He made the allegation there are no problems with those cards, when in fact problems are identified in one of six cards.

The government has presented before the House of Commons a comprehensive reform of the Elections Act. We encourage all members to examine it. We encourage the NDP members to actually read the bill and find out what is in it before asking their questions.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the problem is not people being allowed to vote for the senators, the problem is senators being allowed to vote.

[Translation]

What changed between the draft rejected by the Conservative caucus and the current bill? What changed the Prime Minister's mind?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, the bill before the House of Commons is a comprehensive one.

I encourage the NDP leader to look at the facts and read this bill, which his party has so far refused to read. There is a debate, and the government and opposition will continue this debate as we work towards comprehensive electoral reform.

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[English]

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, economic growth in 2013 was down from the year before, which was down from the year before that, which was down from the year before that. Yet, the government's building Canada infrastructure fund is being cut by 90% this April, with full funding not to be restored until 2019.

With slowing growth, why is the Prime Minister slashing infrastructure funding now?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, speaking about reading things, last year the government presented to Parliament a new building Canada fund, which actually has a record investment over the past decade, strongly supported by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

We are very proud to be doing that. That is an important part of our economic plans going forward, and I would encourage the Liberal Party, if it has absolutely nothing to suggest, to at least vote for the positive things that people support.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is the worst record since R.B. Bennett. It is no wonder that these guys do not understand that adding one point to our growth is \$4 billion to the government's bottom line.

The mayors of Canada's largest cities are in Ottawa today, just in time to see the PM slash their infrastructure funding.

How out of touch has the Prime Minister become? With slowing growth and crumbling infrastructure, he thinks that now is the time to slash 90% off an infrastructure program that Canadian communities depend on.

• (1430)

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what is out of touch is the Liberal leader, who thinks that a budget will balance itself.

Oral Questions

His statement betrays his lack of understanding of the economy and his disconnection from the realities of the Canadian middle class. The reality is that this government, coming out of the recession, has the best growth, the best employment record, the best record on taxes and on debt of any major G7 country, and we are determined to continue to do that.

Mr. Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the only infrastructure these guys seem to have invested in is the lunch delivery infrastructure of the Prime Minister's Office on Wednesdays.

[Translation]

We are starting to see that the Prime Minister has a habit of not following through on his promises, so let us take a look at what he does do.

While the mayors of Canada's biggest cities are in Ottawa today, will the Prime Minister explain why he is making cuts to the infrastructure funding our cities so desperately need?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, last year, the government presented an infrastructure plan for the coming decades that totalled \$70 billion over ten years. That is a record and it received strong support from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

It is unfortunate that the Liberal Party opposes that program, but it is strongly supported by the Conservative members.

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DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, who is responsible for electoral reform in the Prime Minister's Office?

[English]

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, under our system of government, cabinet, of course, is collectively responsible for the legislation it presents before the House of Commons. All of us strongly support that legislation, and that legislation is being led very articulately by the Minister of State for Democratic Reform.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, did anyone from the Prime Minister's Office speak with anyone from Conservative Party headquarters about changes to the Elections Act?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Maybe, Mr. Speaker, they even spoke to Osama bin Laden.

The leader of the NDP keeps descending into these conspiracy theories. There is a bill before the House of Commons. The government's proposals are clear. Whether the opposition members agree with them or not, they should at least read them, understand them, and we can have a debate.

[Translation]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, The Conservatives want to increase donations by exactly \$300.

How did the Prime Minister arrive at a \$300 increase? What is the basis for his decision?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as you well know, the government has put a limit on private donations. At the same time, if we want to eliminate automatic taxpayer transfers to Canadian political parties, we have to ensure that parties are supported and funded by their own supporters.

[English]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, did anybody from the Prime Minister's Office or from the Conservative Party use Conservative donor records to determine that the augmentation should be \$300?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I really do not know how one would do that.

The bill proposes modest increases in the amount of money people can contribute to political parties and riding associations. We believe these amounts of money are sufficient to allow political parties to finance it themselves while at the same time being in a position where they are not beholden to individual contributors. That is how we selected that particular amount.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the unfair elections act would ban the use of voter cards and vouching as a form of ID. Why?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I have explained and as the Minister of State for Democratic Reform has explained multiple times, a large percentage of voter ID cards contain inaccuracies, one in six. There are 39 other pieces of ID that are allowed that are much more appropriate.

Vouching, the idea of voting without having ID at all, is obviously problematic. The Neufeld report and others have identified the capacity for fraud that it entails. That is obviously not appropriate, which is why we are making these changes.

• (1435)

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister has had a day to check on this. Is there any evidence that voter cards or vouching have actually been used to commit voter fraud? Has a single case been investigated or prosecuted?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): The answer, Mr. Speaker, is yes, but in any case, the more disturbing issue is that we actually would not know if that were the case. We do know from the data that is available to us that these forms of voting are subject to the potential of widespread irregularity, which is why Canadians expect us to make sure that voting in this country is always valid.

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the names and addresses on voter cards come directly from the voters' list. If there is a problem, fix that. Do not get away from using that as a way of identifying oneself.

Seventy-three per cent of seniors living in residences use their Elections Canada voter card as a piece of ID when they vote. Why does the Prime Minister want to make it more difficult for seniors to vote?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I see that the Leader of the Opposition is now changing his incorrect statistics from yesterday.

In the case of seniors who live in residences, they can use identification such as an attestation of residence letter of stay, admission form, statement of benefits, or hospital bracelets in the case of hospital care facilities.

Under the act, not only will Elections Canada frequently establish actual voting booths in these particular residences, it will go room to room to enable people to vote.

There are all kinds of IDs—

The Speaker: The hon. Leader of the Opposition.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, voters who use vouching to prove their identity in order to vote have to give their name and address.

Does the Prime Minister know many fraudsters who give their name and address?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I just said, there are 39 pieces of ID that voters can use. Naturally, it is vital that we give everyone the opportunity to vote in order to ensure that the voting is valid.

[*English*]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Section 18 of the unfair elections act says, “The Chief Electoral Officer may provide the public...with information on the following topics only...” There are only five topics listed, none of which is voter fraud. I am sure the Prime Minister understands the meaning of the word “only”.

Why ban the Chief Electoral Officer from speaking about electoral fraud?

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Once again, Mr. Speaker, in terms of fraud or other violations of the act, what is established here is a fully independent commissioner of elections who would have all of the powers of the law to enable him or her to pursue any necessary investigations. It will be done under the Director of Public Prosecutions, absolutely at arm's-length from the government. Obviously we expect Elections Canada to focus its efforts on the good conduct of elections.

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PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

Hon. Gerry Byrne (Humber—St. Barbe—Baie Verte, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, old habits being the way they are, today the PMO chief of staff and some of the highest paid employees of the ministers' offices, some earning up to \$170,000 a year, just tucked into a big taxpayer-funded free lunch, all in full violation of the rules. Yesterday the President of the Treasury Board tried to blame the PCO bureaucrats, but we know that is just not true. These \$67,000 in lunches are part of the PMO disclosure, and the only person who could have approved them is the Prime Minister himself.

Therefore, to the Prime Minister, what was on today's menu, compliments of taxpayers?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to report that since the Liberals, who kind of mainlined their hospitality expenses, were in power, we have actually been able to cut hospitality expenses by the Government of Canada by 48%. We are proud of that number. We are going to continue to respect the taxpayer and do the exact opposite of what they did when they were in power.

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● (1440)

PUBLIC WORKS AND GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives were roundly criticized in a respected defence association report for their abject failure on procurement. Instead of creating thousands of skilled jobs and delivering the planes, ships, and trucks that our troops need, Conservatives have betrayed them.

Last night, aerospace leaders from the west were in Ottawa begging for a better and faster process. Our troops, our industry, and Canadians are paying the price. Could the minister please tell us the price tag for all of their procurement failures, delays, resets, and cancellations over eight lost years?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact, our government is very proud of the many successful military procurements that we have been able to achieve over the last several years, including new LAVs, heavy-lift aircraft, tactical-lift transporters, main battle tanks, and new heavy artillery.

The military lived under a decade of darkness under the Liberals prior to us forming government. We are delivering, as a priority, the equipment that our men and women in uniform need to do their jobs, and we will be doing it in a way that is responsible to taxpayers.

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FINANCE

Hon. John McCallum (Markham—Unionville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, referring to income splitting, two weeks ago the Minister of Finance said: “...I'm not sure that overall, it benefits our society”. Then only yesterday, the Prime Minister said: “...it will be a good policy for Canadian families”.

Given these radically different opinions, who speaks for the government on fiscal policy, and with the finance minister practically handing out his resumé at the G20, does it no longer matter what he thinks?

Oral Questions

Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said yesterday, as I said in Stouffville a couple of weeks ago, and as I said during the election campaign, we think income splitting would be an excellent policy for Canadian families, just as it has been an excellent policy for Canadian seniors.

I know how strongly the Liberal Party opposes income splitting. I know how strongly it opposes it for seniors. I know that it wants to take away that policy for senior citizens. We on this side of the House will never permit that to happen.

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CANADA POST

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Toronto City Council has passed a resolution demanding that Canada Post maintain home delivery. Still, Conservatives are cutting it with no plan. With proposed mega-boxes in neighbourhoods of 10,000 people per square kilometre, whose lawns? What about the traffic, our kids' safety, and seniors?

Canada's big city mayors are meeting in Ottawa today. The government should be investing in, not cutting from, our cities. Why are the Conservatives ignoring Toronto?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada Post is facing, in the future, an incredible loss in its revenue as a result of the mail not being utilized as much. People are making their choices, but in order to deal with that, it has put out a five-point plan. One of the points in its plan is that door-to-door service be phased out for the remaining one-third of mail boxes or mail deliveries in Canada. That has been in place for two-thirds of Canadian addresses since the 1980s.

It has dealt with these matters in the past. I am sure it will continue to deal with these matters in the future.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, our cities need federal support to prosper, but the Conservatives do not seem to realize that. While the mayors of Canada's largest cities are meeting today to talk about the pressing issues affecting our communities, the Conservatives' response is to continue to reduce essential services, leaving the people of Rosemère, Lorraine, Bois-des-Filion, Repentigny and Charlemagne without home mail delivery.

Why does the government continue to ignore the needs of our municipalities?

[*English*]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, let us get one thing straight. We are not stopping the delivery of mail in general. What is happening is that we are converting, or rather, Canada Post is converting one-third—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. Minister of Transport still has the floor.

● (1445)

Hon. Lisa Raitt: Mr. Speaker, the reality is something that they do not want to face, and it is this: already in two-thirds of Canadian

households, the mail is not delivered to the door. Over the next five years, Canada Post plans to phase it out in the other one-third of Canadian households.

Why is it doing that? It is because of something the NDP does not understand. We are trying to make sure the taxpayer is not burdened in the future.

* * *

HOUSING

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, that was telling.

[*Translation*]

If the Conservatives got out of their Ottawa bubble and tried to find affordable housing in Vancouver, Toronto or Montreal, they would see that the housing crisis in Canada is very real.

Housing prices keep going up, just like household debt. Worse still, cuts of over \$1.5 billion are expected over the next few years.

Will the minister review his plans and work with the municipalities to find solutions to the crisis affecting thousands of families?

Hon. Candice Bergen (Minister of State (Social Development), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the opposition is mistaken. Our government provides assistance and support to Canada's most vulnerable citizens.

[*English*]

We are providing support to vulnerable Canadians to the tune of \$14.5 billion. What has that resulted in? It has resulted in more than 880,000 individuals and families being supported through things like our renewal investment in affordable housing, as well as our homelessness partnering strategy.

We are working with our partners. We are providing funding. The taxpayers are doing their job to help vulnerable Canadians.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, anyone waiting forever for affordable housing knows that answer is pure nonsense. Infrastructure money is so bogged down in red tape and absurd rules that little money is getting out the door, and there is no dedicated money for public transit either.

Conservatives are silent on renewing housing agreements and are slowly withdrawing funds. When will the minister drop the red tape and allow local governments to start their work?

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, under all of the categories of the new building Canada plan, transit is accepted. That is under all categories.

Never in Canadian history has a government invested more than our government in public transit. We will continue to do so.

*Oral Questions***UKRAINE**

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Ukraine has been on a pivotal point in its history in this past week, since the Ukrainian parliament ousted Yanukovich and legitimately named Speaker Turchynov as acting president, pending the upcoming elections on May 25.

We welcome the end of months of violent oppression at the hands of the Yanukovich regime. These developments mark progress on Ukraine's path toward democracy, freedom, human rights, and the rule of law.

Would the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs please comment on the situation in Ukraine?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has spoken out many times regarding the violence committed by the Yanukovich regime. Last month, we imposed travel bans on those responsible for the violence in Ukraine. Over the past weeks, Canada has provided medical assistance to those in the Maidan. Yesterday, the Prime Minister announced that a Canadian delegation led by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, along with senior members of the Ukrainian community in Canada, will meet with members of the transitional government and with civil society.

It was this side of the House that requested a debate this evening to discuss the ongoing situation in Ukraine. Canadians can count on our government to support the Ukrainian people's aspirations for unity, for freedom, and for democracy.

* * *

PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the high spending President of the Treasury Board seemed pretty cavalier about the fact that the Prime Minister's staffers have been charging taxpayers for huge meal bills, in violation of the department's guidelines. That was when we thought the bill was \$68,000. Now we find that it is \$130,000, and he is still not blushing.

It cost \$7,000 for one pizza party in the Prime Minister's Office. Would they put the chicken brochette platter aside for one minute and tell us why they think it is okay for the Prime Minister's staff to break rules that are in place to protect the taxpayers?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I find it curious that the opposition members will not even disclose any of their expenses, yet they stand in their places and criticize a government that has cut hospitality expenses by 48%.

That kind of hypocrisy is not tolerated by taxpayers. We are on the side of the taxpayers. We are not on the side of the tax hiking, carbon hiking people on the other side.

•(1450)

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while staff of the Prime Minister's Office stuff their faces with pizza at the taxpayers' expense, every day over 18,000 children in Quebec have to rely on breakfast clubs so they do not start the day on an empty stomach.

In his bubble, the President of the Treasury Board thinks that the rules do not apply to the Conservatives and that it is completely normal to spend \$130,000 on lunches for the Prime Minister's staff. However, Canadians expect a government that will not throw their money out the window. How many awards do the Conservatives have to get from the pig in a tux before they stop wasting taxpayers' money?

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the members of the NDP caucus do not want to disclose their expenses to the people and taxpayers. However, we do. I can tell you once again that we have cut these costs by 48%. We are therefore on the side of taxpayers, not of the NDP.

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GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, perhaps the Conservatives thought that no one would notice that they spent \$2.5 million to advertise a program that exists only in the Minister of Employment and Social Development's overactive imagination, but people did notice.

That is why the Conservatives were the big winners at the gala put on by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, an organization that not so long ago was headed by the Minister of Employment and Social Development. What a blow. Are the Conservatives beginning to understand that receiving booby prizes from the Canadian Taxpayers Federation means that their transformation to Liberals is now complete?

[English]

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Those are fighting words, Mr. Speaker.

The Speaker: Order. The hon. President of the Treasury Board has the floor.

[Translation]

Hon. Tony Clement: Mr. Speaker, the government is responsible for informing Canadians about the important programs and services available to them. Advertising is an essential way for the government to inform Canadians about important issues.

The Canada job grant program will help connect Canadians with available jobs, unlike what the Liberals and New Democrats are doing. They voted against this program.

* * *

[English]

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Mr. Charlie Angus (Timmins—James Bay, NDP): Mr. Speaker, while Canadians are having to chew down on the fact that the Prime Minister charged them \$7,000 for a pizza party in his office, it is little wonder that the Canadian Taxpayers Federation came out with its highest pork award today. Guess who the award went to? It went to the Conservatives sitting right across the way, for billions spent advertising a program that does not exist and millions spent on their cronies in the Senate.

Oral Questions

Canadians know New Democrats will defend the taxpayer, but they want to know what happened to the Reformers across the way who spend all their days defending their entitlements.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order. We need a little more order during both the question and the answer.

The hon. President of the Treasury Board is rising to answer, and I hope his colleagues will allow him to answer the question.

The hon. President of the Treasury Board.

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is Yuk Yuk's comedy hour in question period.

Of course, the NDP was quite happy to accept union donations to do the union line on all these issues, and now its members cloak themselves in the taxpayer mantle. It is to laugh.

However, I can say to hon. members that, of course, we have a responsibility to communicate to Canadians about services that are available—and this Canada job grant is going to be so important to connect Canadians to available jobs—unlike the Liberals and the NDP, who continue to vote against these responsible programs for taxpayers and job creation.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday Canadians learned that my colleague, the member for Mount Royal, was barred from a reception in Israel during the Prime Minister's trip. We can thank the member for York Centre for the shabby treatment of a man who deserves greater respect.

Today, the Minister of Foreign Affairs is heading for Ukraine. However, the Canadian delegation does not include MPs from other parties, even though all parties share the same concerns about Ukraine.

What message are we sending Ukrainians about multi-party democracy when our government excludes members from other parties?

• (1455)

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister's decision to send a Canadian delegation to Ukraine is yet another example of Canada's leadership on this issue, but the NDP members wanted to wait and see. They did not want to take sides. In fact, they criticized us for taking sides. The Liberals actually thought this whole thing was a joke. That is why we are sending people there who have been engaged in this issue, who treat it seriously, and they are standing with the Ukrainian people.

* * *

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, this is indeed a tragedy, so why are Conservative colleagues laughing?

[*Translation*]

According to the United Nations, the largest population—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order.

The hon. member for Saint-Laurent—Cartierville.

Hon. Stéphane Dion: Mr. Speaker, according to the United Nations, the crisis in Syria could create the world's largest refugee population, with the number of refugees expected to reach 4 million by year's end.

Canada has committed to resettling only 1,300 refugees, and barely 200 of those will be resettled through a government assistance program. Meanwhile, Sweden, a country with one-third of our population, has already welcomed 15,000.

Why are the Conservatives behaving so pathetically in the face of this humanitarian disaster, and how many of these 1,300 refugees have arrived in Canada? Will the minister give us the exact number or not?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the hon. member should get his facts straight before rising in the House.

It is true that Sweden and Germany are welcoming thousands of Syrian refugees but only on a temporary basis. Meanwhile, Canada is once again at the top of the list with its commitment to welcome 1,300 refugees this year. We are following that plan. That is why the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has said that Canada has the most generous refugee system in the world.

* * *

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, March break is coming up, and as usual, oil companies will take the opportunity to hike gas prices.

In Montreal yesterday, the average gas price was \$1.40 per litre. In 2006, when the Conservatives came to power, the average annual price of gas in Montreal was just \$1 per litre. Under this Conservative government, the price of gas has risen by 40%.

My question is simple: will the Conservatives introduce measures to prevent oil company collusion so that consumers will no longer get ripped off at the pump?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with respect to gas prices, our government introduced a bill.

[*English*]

It is our government that put in place the Fairness at the Pumps Act in order to protect consumers. It was the NDP that did nothing to promote and push that bill forward; but since when is it the NDP's position to have lower prices for consumers? Since when is it the NDP's position?

Oral Questions

The New Democrats have always advocated for carbon taxes, always advocated for higher prices against consumers, and now they pretend to be in favour of consumers when it comes to gas prices. It is ridiculous. It is our government, our party, that has lowered taxes consistently by over \$3,000 for every Canadian family. It is we who stand with consumers, never the NDP.

Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in my riding, across northern Ontario, and in communities coast to coast to coast, ever increasing gas prices are a top concern for financially squeezed families. The government refuses to act to ensure a competitive marketplace with fair pricing. Gas prices have jumped 20¢ a litre in just the past three years, an 18% hike, while wages just have not kept up.

When will the Prime Minister finally support the NDP's call for a gas price watchdog?

Hon. James Moore (Minister of Industry, CPC): Mr. Speaker, through our legislation we have empowered the Competition Bureau in order to protect Canadian consumers, and the Competition Bureau has in fact put in place fines and protected Canadian consumers. We did that. It was not the New Democrats. It was this Prime Minister, this Conservative government, through our legislation that has protected Canadian consumers. It is New Democrats who want to go after consumers and hurt them with carbon taxes and higher taxes across the board.

It is our government that has lowered taxes, protected consumers, put in place the Fairness at the Pumps Act. It is this Conservative government that protects consumers day in and day out.

* * *

• (1500)

INFRASTRUCTURE

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this Conservative government, since taking office, has delivered a lot for Canadian municipalities. Thousands of infrastructure projects have received federal funding.

Can the minister please explain how the government is planning to support recreational infrastructure going forward?

[*Translation*]

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, I would like to thank my colleague.

Amateur sport infrastructure projects are still eligible under the new building Canada fund. We have doubled the funds available for this kind of project through the gas tax.

Mayors asked us for more flexibility with the gas tax fund, the most generous portion of the plan, and we delivered. With the new building Canada fund, we will support projects to make our economy more competitive, create jobs, and promote long-term growth and prosperity by supporting Canadian municipalities.

[*English*]

EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

Mr. Sean Casey (Charlottetown, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, two cooks are working side by side for the summer at New Glasgow Lobster Suppers. Like many Islanders working seasonally, they require access to EI. One lives in Hunter River, the other lives less than three kilometres away in the rural community of Rennie's Road. Before last week's announced changes, they both qualified for EI. Now just one qualifies and it is not the one from the smaller community.

They do the same job, but gerrymandering will force one to welfare. This advances the political interest of the minister, but how is it fair?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member should know, the employment insurance system has always been based on different regions, which dictates when people qualify for benefits and for how long they will receive them.

In every province there was a distinction made between urban and rural areas. In rural P.E.I., for example, the unemployment rate in some areas is twice what it is in Charlottetown. Finally, we have ended that aberration, that fundamental unfairness in the system. Now we have created regions in P.E.I. that recognize the radically different labour market realities between the rural and urban areas.

Prince Edward Islanders will benefit from these changes.

* * *

[*Translation*]

HEALTH

Mrs. Djaouida Sellah (Saint-Bruno—Saint-Hubert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, we learned this morning that pharmacies might face a shortage of drugs, including Ritalin. Parents and the Ordre des pharmaciens du Québec are concerned about the situation.

The NDP put forward a real solution to address drug shortages by forcing companies to report any upcoming shortages. However, the government stubbornly relies on the goodwill of the industry, while shortages continue to increase.

Will the minister realize that action is urgently needed?

[*English*]

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in fact it was several months ago that I stood with the provinces and territories to announce a pan-Canadian strategy to manage and prevent shortages to reduce their impact.

It does exactly what the member is suggesting. Companies have to provide advance notices of shortages online, and they also have to include information for physicians on alternative treatments.

We continue to monitor all of these issues very closely, and we are open to also considering a mandatory approach if necessary.

*Routine Proceedings***SENIORS**

Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, seniors are an integral part of our families, communities, and workforce. Statistics show that 36% of them volunteer their time, and 80% are actively involved in their communities. We on this side of the House, and that side, believe in supporting seniors.

Could the Minister of State for Seniors update the House on some of the great initiatives for seniors in economic action plan 2014?

Hon. Alice Wong (Minister of State (Seniors), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague on the Conservative side for that great question.

We are proud of the support we have seen for seniors in economic action plan 2014. We have seen an 11% increase in funding to the new horizons for seniors program; the renewal of the targeted initiative for older workers program, which assists unemployed older workers reintegrate into the workforce; the creation of the Canadian employers for caregivers action plan to help caregivers participate in the labour market, and the list goes on.

All Canadians, especially seniors, can be proud of economic action plan 2014.

* * *

• (1505)

[*Translation*]

INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Mrs. Sadia Groguhé (Saint-Lambert, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservative government's insistence on imposing new rules for the Canada job grant, despite provincial opposition, might hurt Quebec.

Youth employment centres, which help young people 16 to 35 years old develop their employability, could lose their funding.

When we know that the unemployment rate for that group is twice as high as for the rest of the population, there is some cause for concern.

Can the minister guarantee that the reform he is trying to impose will help reduce the youth unemployment rate?

Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC): Yes, Mr. Speaker.

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CANADA POST

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, seniors and people with reduced mobility in Ahuntsic are worried about the government's attitude, since it is doing nothing to prevent the end of door-to-door mail delivery. This is despite the fact that Canada Post has enjoyed surpluses for the past 10 years, except the year when Canada Post locked out its employees.

Does the government want to give sovereignists more ammunition by abandoning Canada Post, a community-based institution that brings the Canadian identity to every region of Quebec?

[*English*]

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the reality is that there is a lack of demand at Canada Post. It has had a responsibility since 1981 to be self-sufficient. We know that in the coming years, given the fact that the reduction in mail volume is 25%, it could see a deficit of \$1 billion coming. That is serious for Canadian taxpayers. That is why Canada Post is taking action. Its five-point plan, once implemented, would see it self-sufficient again in 2019.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[*English*]

TOUGHER PENALTIES FOR CHILD PREDATORS ACT

Hon. Peter MacKay (Central Nova, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-26, An Act to amend the Criminal Code, the Canada Evidence Act and the Sex Offender Information Registration Act, to enact the High Risk Child Sex Offender Database Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

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

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COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114 I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs regarding membership of committees of the House. If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the eighth report later this day.

* * *

CANADA PENSION PLAN

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-576, An Act to amend the Canada Pension Plan (retroactive payments).

She said: Mr. Speaker, it is my honour to introduce a survivor pensioners bill. Widowers and widows deserve justice. The existing application deadline for the Canada pension plan is disqualifying survivors from accessing their late spouses' benefits. That is why I am putting forward new legislation to abolish deadlines that restrict survivor claims to only 11 months. This is a matter of fairness.

One of my constituents was denied two years' worth of retroactive payments because she missed a deadline while grieving the loss of her husband to cancer. We owe it to grieving Canadians and their late spouses, who have paid into the fund all of their lives, to make this change now.

Routine Proceedings

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

* * *

• (1510)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, if the House gives it consent, I move that the eighth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs presented to the House earlier today be concurred in.

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)

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Speaker, there have been consultations among the three parties trying to grasp words to come up with a version of a motion on Venezuela that will satisfy everyone. However, I do not think there is going to be consensus. I am rising to ask for unanimous consent to move the following motion about what is happening in Venezuela. I hope that the rest of the members will agree and that we can move forward.

I move that the House condemn the brutal, repressive government measures toward peaceful civilian protesters in Venezuela and call on the government to inform President Nicolas Maduro that the people of Canada stand with Venezuelans in their right to peaceful protest; that the Maduro government release all those detained during the protests; and that all government interference with the peaceful protesters should cease immediately; that those people who perpetrated the violence should be brought to justice and bear the full weight of the law; and that in the event the government of Venezuela continues to suppress peaceful protest, the Government of Canada should examine further measures to express its displeasure with these actions.

I hope that everyone supports this motion as we move forward in order to address the situation in Venezuela.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

Mr. Nathan Cullen: Mr. Speaker, I am somewhat disappointed, yet not surprised, that the member for Scarborough—Agincourt has again attempted to proceed this way. Consultations are indeed going on between the parties. The member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, I believe, will be proposing some language that has achieved at least some momentum.

However, the whole point of the exercise is to have the House of Commons recognize the plight of Venezuelans and the seriousness of the situation in Venezuela, which requires House leaders to speak

with one another and to respect one another. If the member does not have that same respect for this place and for the House leaders who do the work on his behalf, his party and all the parties, as my colleague across the way and I are doing, then that is his choice, but to continue to do these types of activities in the House, where he knows full well that unanimous consent can be sought but not achieved without proper consultation, is wrong.

We will seek language, as is the member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie, about this very serious issue and will hopefully achieve the kind of consensus that will actually show the people of Venezuela that members of the Canadian Parliament can in fact work together on the seriousness of the crimes being committed in their country.

Hon. Peter Van Loan: Mr. Speaker, for further edification, several drafts are already circulating. Unlike the hon. member for Scarborough—Agincourt, I am optimistic that a consensus can be achieved, and it is important that a consensus be achieved. This is an issue the government cares about deeply in terms of allowing democracy to have a fighting chance in Venezuela. I believe all parties care about that, and for the member for Scarborough—Agincourt to short-circuit a process through which we could otherwise achieve unanimity and consensus is indeed unfortunate. Canada will speak much louder if we do indeed speak with unanimity, which I believe is possible.

The Speaker: I am going to say at the outset that I understand members have now made representations to the Chair about why unanimous consent has not yet been achieved. It sounds as though these are inter-party negotiations that are best left not on the floor of the House of Commons but among the individual members and the House leaders. They are certainly not points of order.

Very simply, we have had a request for unanimous consent and the request has been denied. Perhaps optimism will carry through the day and members will be able to come back with something that the members will find unanimous consent on. I am not going to entertain any more interventions on this particular point.

We are still under the rubric of “motions”. The hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie has the floor.

• (1515)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Lavergère: Mr. Speaker, we are all very concerned about the difficult situation in Venezuela right now. Last weekend, I had the opportunity to meet with Venezuelans living in Canada.

I am proud to move the following motion:

[*English*]

That the House express its deep concern at the escalation of violence in Venezuela, convey its condolences to the families of those killed or injured during the ongoing public protest, ask the Government of Canada to urge Venezuelan authorities to proactively de-escalate the conflict and protect the human rights and democratic freedoms of Venezuelan citizens, encourage the Government of Canada to play a leading role in supporting a political dialogue in Venezuela that respects legitimate grievances and differences of opinion, and call for an end to divisive rhetoric and actions that only delay and jeopardize the inclusive political situation that the Venezuelan people deserve.

Routine Proceedings

I hope this motion will get the unanimous consent of the House.

The Speaker: Does the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie have the unanimous consent of the House to propose this motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

The Speaker: There is no consent.

The hon. member for Winnipeg North is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Speaker, I did find it interesting that the House leader of the New Democratic Party stood up on a point of order and talked about consultation, and then a member from his own political party stood up and introduced a motion.

I want to make reference to this occurrence because in his opening comments on his point of order, the NDP House leader did impute motives of the member for Scarborough—Agincourt. That is, we have to take all members as being honourable members. On two consecutive days, Monday and Tuesday, the member for Scarborough—Agincourt attempted to bring in this issue as an emergency debate and has worked very hard to try to build on a consensus to get this. The New Democrats have been afforded the opportunity to have

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

The Speaker: Order, please.

I see the hon. member for Scarborough—Agincourt is rising on a point of order. I do hope he recognizes my concern that this is quickly devolving into a debate about perhaps what goes on at a House leaders' meeting and not actually a point of order. However, I will hear him and hope that he gets to a point of order very quickly.

Hon. Jim Karygiannis: Mr. Speaker, in reference to what the House leader from the NDP said, he should be the one who questions what happened. It was given 24 hours. They came back and forth. The basic stuff was here. They came back and forth and they even tried to blackmail us if we did not go their way. They are going to present—

The Speaker: Order.

It has never been the practice of the Chair to pronounce on things that take place during House leaders' meetings or what goes on in negotiations to try to find unanimous consent. The Chair's job is quite simple: it is to see if unanimous consent exists at this time, and clearly it does not. Perhaps throughout the day or the rest of the week, there will be a different outcome, but at the moment there is clearly no consent, and I will ask hon. members to come to order.

Presenting petitions, the hon. member for Acadie—Bathurst has the floor.

* * *

[Translation]

PETITIONS

VIA RAIL

Mr. Yvon Godin (Acadie—Bathurst, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have here a petition signed by several hundred people who are urging the Government of Canada to take any measures necessary to restore

VIA Rail's daily round-trip service between Montreal, Quebec, and Halifax, Nova Scotia, via Campbellton, Bathurst and Miramichi, New Brunswick.

[English]

CANADA POST

Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I present a petition to the House of Commons from residents and constituents in Sarnia—Lambton concerning the reduction in Canada Post services.

• (1520)

SEX SELECTION

Hon. Judy Sgro (York West, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, recently the CBC revealed that ultrasounds are being used in Canada to tell the sex of an unborn child so that expectant parents can choose to terminate the pregnancy if the unborn child is a girl.

The petitioners call upon all members of Parliament to condemn discrimination against females occurring through sex-selective pregnancy termination.

CANADA POST

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to table petitions from citizens of Edmonton, St. Albert, Sherwood Park, Morinville, Wetaskiwin, Fort McMurray, Stony Plain, and Grande Prairie. The petitioners call for the Government of Canada to reverse the cuts to services announced by Canada Post and to look instead for ways to innovate. They are concerned about the cuts to the service, which will hurt seniors and disabled Canadians.

HEALTH

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my second petition is from Edmontonians calling on the government to fully co-operate with the provinces and territories to negotiate a new health accord by 2014 that improves health care services through stronger federal leadership backed by long-term and stable health care funding.

CANADA POST

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition signed by a number of people from Cranbrook, British Columbia, calling on the Government of Canada to reverse the cuts to services announced by Canada Post and to look instead for ways to innovate in areas such as postal banking.

SNOW SPORT HELMETS

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have to petitions to present. The first one is from over 700 petitioners who say that whereas in the summer of 2008 the Canadian Standards Association published standards for safe recreational snow sport helmets, they therefore call on the Government of Canada to amend the Hazardous Products Act to prohibit the advertising, sale, or importation into Canada of any recreational snow sport helmet that does not meet the standards of the Canadian Standards Association.

EXPERIMENTAL LAKES AREA

Hon. Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from about 70 petitioners who wish the Government of Canada to recognize the importance of the ELA to the Government of Canada's mandate to study, preserve, and protect aquatic ecosystems; reverse its decision to close the ELA research station; and continue to staff and provide financial resources for the ELA at the current level of commitment or at a higher one.

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I stand on behalf of my constituents of South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, who are calling for tougher laws and a new mandatory minimum sentence for those convicted of impaired driving and for redefining the offence of impaired driving causing death as vehicular manslaughter.

CANADA POST

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have three petitions to present. The first petition asks the Government of Canada to reverse the cuts to services announced by Canada Post and to look instead for ways to innovate in areas such as postal banking.

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ALFALFA

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls upon Parliament to impose a moratorium on the release of genetically modified alfalfa in order to allow a proper review of the impact on farmers in Canada.

FOOD AND DRUGS ACT

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the third petition calls on the House to amend the Food and Drugs Act to establish mandatory labelling for genetically modified foods.

CANADA POST

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I present a petition from my constituents on the changes that are happening at Canada Post. I, of course, have made my own views on the subject known by writing an article locally in the *Saint Croix Courier*. These are nonetheless the opinions of my constituents, and I table them with respect.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my first petition asks the Government of Canada to ban bulk oil tanker traffic off the north coast of B.C. and say no to the Enbridge northern gateway pipeline.

● (1525)

PARKS CANADA

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my second petition asks the Government of Canada to extend the operating hours of the Rideau Canal and the Trent-Severn Waterway.

CANADA POST

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the third petition asks the government to maintain and improve postal service to Canadians under the Canada postal service charter.

Routine Proceedings

They note that the reduction of service means the loss of thousands of good jobs and hurts seniors and people with disabilities.

THE ENVIRONMENT

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fourth petition calls on the Government of Canada to return the Port of Oshawa back to the citizens of Oshawa through their local city council.

PENSIONS

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the last petition asks the federal government to lift seniors out of poverty by enhancing the pension system, increasing the guaranteed income supplement, and keeping the eligibility for old age security at 65 years and not 67 years.

IMPAIRED DRIVING

Mr. Jim Hillyer (Lethbridge, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am presenting a petition calling upon Parliament and the government to make a change to the Criminal Code of Canada with respect to drinking and driving. The petitioners wish the charges to be more severe, moving up toward vehicular manslaughter.

[*Translation*]

MINING INDUSTRY

Mr. Jean-François Larose (Repentigny, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to present two petitions today. The first is from Saint-Paul-l'Ermite parish in Repentigny and the other from Saints-Simon-et-Jude parish in Charlemagne.

Reports show that mining companies are problematic. These petitions call for the creation of a legal ombudsman mechanism for responsible mining.

The Office of the Extractive Sector Corporate Social Responsibility Counsellor is ineffective. We need to create a legal ombudsman mechanism that can receive, investigate and assess information and make its findings public so that remedial action can be taken.

[*English*]

LYME DISEASE

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

The first is from residents from my own community, from Victoria and surrounding communities in Sidney and some of the Gulf Islands. They ask, and I say this with the greatest of hope, that when Bill C-442, the bill for a national Lyme disease strategy, comes before this House on March 3, that these petitioners' petitions can be realized with passage to second reading and then ultimately into law.

Routine Proceedings

GENETICALLY MODIFIED ORGANISMS

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, the next petition deals with the issue of genetically modified organisms. It comes from residents throughout Quebec and the area of St. Catharines, Ontario, who are calling upon the House to label genetically modified organisms since it is quite important to look at these views as we approach Bill C-18.

[*Translation*]

VIA RAIL

Ms. Marie-Claude Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot, NDP): Mr. Speaker, today I am pleased to present a petition calling for the restoration of daily VIA Rail service between Montreal and Halifax via Campbellton and Miramichi, New Brunswick.

I would like to point out that 24,000 people have signed this petition. This is a very important issue. I would also like to stress that Canadians need a decent rail system and that the east coast should not be isolated.

[*English*]

CANADA POST

Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapusksing, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise in the House today to table petitions from residents from Kapuskasing, Hearst, Val Rita, North Gower, Timmins, and Val-des-Bois, Quebec.

The petitioners are concerned because the government is axing a key piece of heritage that provides services to Canadians, killing up to 8,000 jobs, eliminating door-to-door delivery, increasing postage rates, reducing postal hours, and pushing for post office closures. In short, the government is increasing costs to Canadians and providing less service. The petitioners are concerned about the impact on seniors and disabled Canadians. There has been no consultation. They ask the government to reverse the cuts and look for ways that innovate.

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions. The first is from concerned Londoners in response to a terrible tragedy in London, Ontario, regarding a family. These petitioners want the Government of Canada, and particularly the Department of Citizenship and Immigration Canada, to make sure that offices are properly staffed so that wait times can be reduced and to ensure that immigration officers consider all factors in regard to an individual's application for status, including humanitarian and compassionate grounds.

CANADA POST

Ms. Irene Mathysen (London—Fanshawe, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the second petition is from concerned Londoners who want the Canada Post plan for reduced services to be rejected by the government. They want the government to ensure that the 6,000 to 8,000 jobs that would be lost are preserved. They want the government to fulfill its promise to protect consumers and to explore other options to update the crown corporation's business plan.

DURHAM REGION FEDERAL LANDS

Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have but one petition, signed by many, to present today.

It reads in part:

Whereas the Federal Lands of Ontario's Durham Region encompass Class 1 Ontario Greenbelt farmland and vital watersheds of the Oak Ridges Moraine;

And whereas the Federal Government has recently announced that the Lands will be used for an airport and economic development but not for agriculture;

And whereas there is no business case for an airport at Pickering ...

And whereas ruling out agricultural uses on prime farmland — the land that feeds us — is unacceptable policy in the 21st century;

We, the undersigned citizens of Canada, call upon the House of Commons in Parliament assembled:

To rescind all plans for an airport and non-agricultural uses on the Federal Lands in Durham Region; and to act, instead, to preserve the watersheds and agricultural land of this irreplaceable natural resource, for the long-term benefit of all Canadians.

• (1530)

[*Translation*]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. Hoang Mai (Brossard—La Prairie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege today to present a petition that calls on the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration to do more for Syrian refugees looking for a country to welcome them.

We have received hundreds of signatures to present to the House and even more electronic signatures. The petitioners call on the Government of Canada to increase the number of government-sponsored Syrian refugees, provide additional resources to the visa office, grant temporary visas to eligible Syrians, speed up the processing of applications and suspend the return of any Syrians to their country until the situation improves.

Finally, I would like to congratulate Amnesty International for doing an outstanding job of raising awareness and encouraging action. Bravo to the people of Amnesty International for doing an exemplary job.

[*English*]

SYRIA

Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I too have a petition signed by young Canadians who are concerned about the situation in Syria.

The petitioners are asking the Canadian government to bring more of these people to Canada and to provide resources for them when they arrive.

CANADA POST

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today with a petition signed by many residents of York South—Weston. Members on the other side of the House have brought forward similar petitions.

These petitioners call upon the federal government to reject Canada Post's plan to reduce services and explore other options for updating Canada Post's business plan to better protect consumers, to protect jobs, and to protect an essential public service.

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

MOTIONS FOR PAPERS

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

* * *

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have two items that have been subject to consultation among the various parties, for which I believe if you seek it you will find unanimous consent. This motion is with regard to our concurrence debate scheduled for tomorrow evening. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practices of the House, during debate tomorrow on the motion to concur in the Third Report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, the Chair shall not receive any quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent; at the end of the time remaining for the debate, or when no member rises to speak, all questions necessary to dispose of the motion be deemed put and a recorded division be deemed requested.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

CITIZENSHIP ACT

(Bill C-425. On the Order: Private Members' Bills:)

Bill C-425, An Act to amend the Citizenship Act (honouring the Canadian Armed Forces)

Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the second motion relates to Bill C-425, which is a private member's bill that remains outstanding. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, the order for consideration at report stage of Bill C-425, an act to amend the Citizenship Act

The Budget

(honouring the Canadian Armed Forces), standing on the order paper in the name of the member for Calgary Northeast be discharged and the bill withdrawn.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Order discharged and bill withdrawn)

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed from February 25 consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant (Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I will be sharing my time with the member for Kootenay—Columbia.

As the member of Parliament for Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, I welcome this opportunity to rise to speak to budget 2014, our government's economic action plan for creating jobs and opportunities for Canadians.

I certainly encourage all Canadians to take the opportunity to find out how they can benefit from the sound economic leadership provided by the Prime Minister, and our Conservative government, by reading our well-received economic road map. In my remarks today, I intend to highlight those sections of the budget document that are of particular interest to my constituents in the great riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke, beginning with Atomic Energy of Canada Limited.

Atomic Energy of Canada, or AECL, is a federal crown corporation that operates Canada's largest nuclear science and technology laboratories. AECL develops innovative applications of nuclear technology, with applications ranging from research and development to waste management and the decommissioning of nuclear facilities.

AECL continues to be a significant employer in the upper Ottawa Valley, providing well-paying jobs in my riding and throughout Canada. AECL employs approximately 2,000 staff at the Chalk River and Deep River locations, and 3,400 employees company-wide. This is in addition to the thousands of jobs in the nuclear supply chain which help to drive the Canadian economy.

The Budget

Economic action plan 2014 proposes to provide \$117 million, over two years, for Atomic Energy of Canada Limited to maintain safe and reliable operations at Chalk River Laboratories, secure the supply of medical isotopes, and prepare for the expected transition of the laboratories to a government-owned, contractor-operated model. The Government of Canada has announced that it would move forward with the restructuring of AECL's nuclear laboratories to ensure that its operations are efficient and continue to meet the needs of Canadians.

While AECL is recognized as a leader in the nuclear power industry, many Canadians are not aware of the significant science, research, and development work that takes place at Chalk River Laboratories. AECL's efforts in environmental mediation and nuclear waste management enable activities that are focused on addressing our government's commitment to a clean and healthy environment for Canadians.

Its main activities include the management of nuclear waste in a safe, secure, and environmentally sound manner; the retrieval and remediation of stored legacy waste to mitigate environmental risks; the development of technologies for waste processing and storage; and the decommissioning of facilities to remove the risks and liabilities of the facilities.

AECL has four specific capabilities: nuclear waste management and water treatment, environmental remediation and engineering, the development of nuclear waste management facilities, and facility decommissioning. Additionally, these capabilities can be enhanced through strategic collaborations and engaging AECL's supply chain.

Here is a quote from the *AECL Nuclear Review*:

Concern for the environment, along with public health, security, and safety is a ubiquitous feature of today's social consciousness. Radiation, as a sometimes feared and often misunderstood harbinger of both the beneficial and harmful consequences of nuclear science and technology, occupies a special niche in that consciousness. On the one hand, high-tech, clean nuclear energy provides the means for sustaining our lifestyles while avoiding millions of tons of greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating the environmental consequences of climate change and extreme weather events. On the other hand, the operation of nuclear facilities and storage of the radioactive nuclear fuel waste raises legitimate concerns around the spread of radioactivity in the environment and the perceived detrimental and sometimes multi-generational consequences on people and on the ecosystem. This equation, balancing benefits for people against real or perceived harm to the environment, applies to nearly all nuclear activities, including radiation therapy, nuclear medicine and the production and use of medical and industrial isotopes.

● (1535)

The intention of the piece is to highlight some of the science that informs discussion on radiation, the environment, and health. I quoted from the *AECL Nuclear Review* to point out that attitudes are changing about clean, greenhouse gas-free nuclear power.

The environmental movement, particularly the more mature individuals in the movement, are recognizing that a green future needs nuclear power.

Those of us who believe that nuclear energy has a critical role to play to ameliorate the effects of global climate change were encouraged by a recent open letter to environmentalists, signed by such people as Dr. Ken Caldeira, senior scientist, department of global ecology, Carnegie Institution; and Dr. James Hansen, climate scientist, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

These and other like-minded individuals are urging those individuals who are truly concerned about the environment to support the development of safer nuclear energy systems, such as Canada's success story, the CANDU system.

To quote their open letter to environmentalists:

No energy system is without downsides. We ask only that energy system decisions be based on facts, and not on emotions and biases that do not apply to 21st century nuclear technology. [...] the time has come for those who take the threat of global warming seriously to embrace the development and deployment of safer nuclear power systems as one among several technologies that will be essential to any credible effort to develop an energy system that does not rely on using the atmosphere as a waste dump.

I have no doubt that the same radical environmentalists who recommended forcing rural Ontario to accept industrial wind turbines and the out-of-control electricity rates that are bankrupting Ontario hydro customers were the same individuals who convinced the Ontario Liberal Party to turn its back on the Canadian nuclear success story.

The so-called Green Energy Act is forcing people in rural Ontario to have to choose between heating and eating.

I mention this because one of the architects of the disastrous policy in Toronto is now the principal advisor to the Liberal Party in Ottawa. Gerald Butts, called the "puppeteer" by the media for the way he controls the Liberal leader, would like to introduce a new version of the disastrous national energy policy of the 1980s that is causing electricity bills to skyrocket in Ontario. Worst of all, the cornerstone of an updated Liberal NEP is a carbon tax.

Ontario needs to cancel its high electricity rate policy. That policy is forcing our manufacturing industry and the jobs that go with it to flee to the American border states that benefit from Ontario Hydro paying them to take power from industrial wind turbines that nobody here wants.

Liberal economic policy has turned Ontario from being the economic engine of Canada into a have-not province.

The future is nuclear, for reliable, economic, greenhouse gas-free electricity, brought to us by the 70,000 Canadians that are employed in the Canadian nuclear industry, including the close to 3,000 people employed at the Chalk River Laboratories of AECL.

As time permits, the other area that I would like to focus on in budget 2014 is our defence procurement strategy.

The Budget

Our government's procurement strategy is a perfect fit with Innovation Valley North. Innovation Valley North, in addition to developing synergy between existing Ottawa Valley employers, looks to build on AECL as well as CFB Petawawa to stimulate local employment by creating a local supply chain. As my riding of Renfrew—Nipissing—Pembroke is home to Canadian Forces Base Petawawa, this strategy is of particular importance as our government ensures that our military have the right equipment to do the best job.

• (1540)

Our government is implementing the defence procurement strategy to ensure defence procurement generates economic benefits and jobs for Canadians, because our government recognizes the importance of building a stronger and more competitive defence sector that is better able to develop innovative products and solutions, delivery high-value exports, and create high-paying jobs for Canadians.

The defence procurement strategy has three key objectives, which I will talk about later.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to my colleague's comments about atomic energy and how clean a fuel it is.

However, I wonder if she or the residents of her riding really understand that the fuel that is stored near the Chalk River nuclear facility needs to be managed, and it needs to be managed for 500,000 years.

What is the economic action plan going to say about managing spent fuel for 500,000 years?

• (1545)

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, the budget does speak directly to strategies for managing spent fuel. There are different types of spent fuel. Only 1% of the nuclear energy in a spent fuel rod has been used. That is why they are developing new ways at Chalk River to store spent fuel rods, not waste, but spent fuel rods, so that in the future, when our supplies of uranium have been depleted, we can take these spent fuel rods and use them again for more energy.

Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I listened with interest to the member's speech as she tried to attack staff in the Liberal leader's office and imply certain things while accepting no responsibility for the decisions of her own government, in terms of Chalk River and the nuclear energy in this country. Many of the government's decisions have been bad.

However, I wonder if the member would give her thoughts on some of the consequences of this budget, and previous budgets, on rural Canadians who work in the seasonal industries. I know there are a lot of seasonal workers in her riding.

In my riding of Malpeque, the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans, while trying to pad her nest to protect her own interest in her own riding, rather than operating as a regional minister for the benefit of the whole province, used a cookie-cutter approach to cut up the riding. On one side of the road, a person could work 460 hours and draw 29 weeks of EI, while on the other side of the road, another person would have to work 1,120 hours in order to qualify for the same amount of EI.

Does the member think that is acceptable in rural Canada, for rural development and rural seasonal industries?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, I make no apologies for mentioning the puppeteer for the trust-fund child who leads the Liberal Party of Canada today.

However, I will talk about former budgets, former budgets the Liberals brought in that resulted in the rust-out of Chalk River Laboratories, which subsequently resulted in a shortage of medical supplies for a couple of years. Because of that, people were denied timely diagnostics.

We, to the contrary, have provided extra funds to ensure not only that Chalk River Laboratories is running smoothly and providing a stable supply but that we also fixed up the mess the Liberals left after 13 years.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I listened to my friend's speech. I was surprised to see, yet again, more money in the budget down the wasteful sinkhole of helping out Atomic Energy of Canada Limited. It has been tens of billions of dollars over the lifetime of that organization. I thought when we got rid of it, we would get rid of having to subsidize it.

My friend cited Dr. James Hansen, renowned climate scientist, who is now urging environmentalists to accept nuclear power.

However, that is because he is so dreadfully concerned that the climate crisis is going unaddressed. He specifically refers to the oil sands as "game over for the climate" if we continue to exploit them and he would only be interested in Canada's position on nuclear energy if we had a climate policy.

We now stand at a point where, according to Environment Canada, we will completely, totally, and utterly miss the target that the Prime Minister chose in 2009 at Copenhagen. We were supposed to go from 737 megatonnes to 609 megatonnes. Instead, by 2020, when the due date falls, we will be at 734 megatonnes—a meagre three-megatonne reduction.

Does the hon. member not think it is too rich for the Conservative side of this House to invoke Dr. James Hansen on some issues while studiously and resolutely avoiding his advice on others?

Mrs. Cheryl Gallant: Mr. Speaker, our government has set real goals for cutting pollution, and cutting pollution will ensure a more hospitable atmosphere.

In terms of environmentalists, environmentalists who are truly concerned about Canada's air, water, and land are recognizing that nuclear energy is a clean, sustainable, and economically advantaged form of producing energy, as opposed to wind turbines and some of the costs involved in the manufacture of solar cells. Far more emissions occur as a consequence of the manufacture of those than are contained in all the emissions that occur when building a nuclear power plant.

• (1550)

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to speak to economic action plan 2014, a road map to take us forward to a balanced budget in 2015.

The Budget

I want to speak specifically to my riding of Kootenay—Columbia, which provides a variety of opportunities for people who live in that region, from mining to tourism to forestry. We have some of the most magnificent areas in the country in Kootenay—Columbia with four national parks that employ great people. It allows tens of thousands, if not hundreds of thousands of people, to come to our national parks each year to enjoy what I take for granted every day when I am driving through there.

One of the main things in the budget that is of great benefit to my riding is the new Canada apprenticeship loan program, which would allow up to \$100 million in interest-free loans to individuals who are applying for their first red seal apprentice program. It is a great opportunity for up to 26,000 people per year, that we estimate will apply for these types of loans, to allow them to move forward in a growing and demanding field. In all honesty, we do not have enough red seal apprentice programs. I do not know if we can find enough of them, but this is a great start for 26,000 people a year to move forward.

In communities such as Fort McMurray, my area in southeastern British Columbia of Elk Valley, companies like Teck, Finning, Joy Global, Cummins have a high demand for all of the red seal trades, including welders, heavy duty mechanics, and millwrights, and it is so important that we ensure that our children have the opportunity to get into the trades if they so choose.

We also recognize that we live in challenging times as well with regard to rural Canada. Many students in apprenticeship programs need to travel long distances to go to school for a particular trade, no matter what the trade is. This budget recognizes as well that they have the opportunity to use some of that funding to ensure that while they are at school they can cover the cost of being away from home. In an ideal world, we would like to have our apprentices trained at home if they so choose, but that is not necessarily the reality in rural British Columbia.

One thing I am happy to see in the budget is found on page 72, which is the flexibility and innovation in apprenticeship technical training. It refers to it as in-class simulators, e-learning modules, remote learning sites, and video conferencing in place of, or in addition to, traditional in-class training.

For example, in my riding, in both Cranbrook and Fernie, truck simulators are used to train new employees in the mining industry, to speed up the process in their ability to drive huge 350-tonne haul trucks and larger, which are used not only in my area but also in Fort McMurray and elsewhere in Canada. It is a great opportunity and these are high-paying skilled jobs. Jobs that young Canadians can use, that are in huge demand, and for which we cannot find enough people. I encourage people to go into this line of work if they so choose.

Another thing I noticed in the budget means a lot to western Canada. It started out as an agreement between British Columbia and Alberta. It was initially called TILMA. It was a trade agreement that came forward with the opportunity for British Columbia and Alberta to break down the barriers between the two provinces, allowing them to trade more freely and utilize their workforces more freely from one province to another. It has now morphed itself into an agreement that now includes Saskatchewan. We now have three of the western

provinces, British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan, morphed into what is called the New West Partnership Trade Agreement. That agreement allows the three provinces to move workforces around unimpeded and allows them to work more collaboratively together.

• (1555)

As the minister has explained in the document, it will be similar to what my colleague from Okanagan—Coquihalla brought forward with his private member's bill on the movement of spirits and wine from province to province. There was a barrier before. It prohibited entrepreneurs in that workforce from moving their product, even internally in Canada, from province to province.

This is a great opportunity for Canadians to work with fewer restrictions from province to province. As we look at initiatives like that within the provinces, it will give great mobility.

The other thing I am quite happy about is found on page 158 of the budget. It has to do with sustaining Canada's national parks. Four national parks in our great nation lie in my constituency: Yoho National Park, Glacier National Park, Mount Revelstoke National Park, and Kootenay National Park. Among them are some of the oldest in all of Canada and some of the most majestic, with the Rocky Mountains and the Purcells.

It was very nice to see in the budget that \$391.5 million over five years, on a cash basis, will be provided to Parks Canada to improve the highways, bridges, and dams located in our national parks. Specific to my region, it also says, "...as well as paving and other repairs to the section of the Trans-Canada Highway which passes through Glacier National Park in British Columbia".

The Trans-Canada Highway is our main gateway from the east coast to the west coast. It was created to allow merchant travel right from Saint John's, Newfoundland to Victoria, British Columbia. However, a bottleneck has been created. That bottleneck starts at the Alberta-B.C. border. From Winnipeg to the Alberta-B.C. border, the Trans-Canada Highway is twinned, and then all of a sudden it goes down to two lanes, with the same amount of traffic on it. It is creating a bottleneck.

It is very good to see that this money has been put in there. The federal government has sole responsibility for ensuring that the Trans-Canada Highway is maintained through the national parks of Canada.

These three national parks, Yoho, Glacier, and Mount Revelstoke, also have the Trans-Canada traversing them, so I am very happy to see that in there. I am looking forward to working with the ministry and with my other colleagues to ensure that it happens.

There are a few other things that are very good for my riding. They include the new horizons for seniors program, which we have increased funding for. The small grants that are provided each year to seniors programs are huge for senior Canadians across Canada. I am very pleased to see that.

The Budget

I am glad to see that we are providing additional funding for the Special Olympics. It is near and dear to my heart. In the business I own, I work quite closely with the Special Olympics. They bring a smile to our faces every time we see them active in our communities. They have such pride in what they want to do.

Finally, on another note, I am very happy to see in the budget that we have the DNA databank coming forward. It is imperative for those parents who have lost someone. It is imperative that, at the end of the day, we reconnect those who are missing with those who are trying to find them.

With that, I look forward to any questions that may come.

• (1600)

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague and friend for his remarks.

In the September 2013 Speech from the Throne, the government promised to improve railway safety. The mayor of Lac-Mégantic was even in attendance. However, there is no mention of railway safety in the budget. There is no funding for inspections.

Why has the government not decided to invest in railway safety, when it knows that this is a major issue for people in Sherbrooke, the Eastern Townships and all regions of Canada where derailments are more and more frequent?

[English]

Mr. David Wilks: Mr. Speaker, I would kindly refer the member to the building Canada fund, which will now provide funding for short-line rail across Canada. It will allow us to improve the rail lines. It will be a great benefit for all communities to access the building Canada fund for those specific reasons.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to get the member's comments regarding the tourism industry.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce pointed out in its annual report that at one time, Canada had the seventh largest industry in terms of being a tourism destination. Now it has slipped to number 18. If we were to canvass economists, stakeholders, tourism groups, and so forth, they would tell us that tourism is a phenomenal industry. It creates literally tens of thousands of important jobs. Whether they are full-time career jobs or part-time student jobs, they are critical to our economy.

Why does the member believe we have seen such a dramatic drop in Canada's standing in the tourism file over the last few years? What has the government done to try to improve tourism? All signs indicate that dropping from seventh to 18th in the world is the wrong way. Something is going wrong. What does he believe is going wrong?

Mr. David Wilks: Mr. Speaker, from the perspective of the Kootenay—Columbia riding, which boasts some of the greatest tourism opportunities in all of Canada, with four national parks, skiing opportunities, and countless golf courses, we have found that when companies promote themselves well through the opportunities our government has provided for promotion from sea to sea to sea, people come to the riding and spend their money in the riding. Tourism, which is part of the backbone of my constituency, is doing

very well. It is because of our actions that we are allowing people to come from other countries to enjoy what we have in Canada.

[Translation]

Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault: Mr. Speaker, I would like to ask my colleague specifically about National Defence's procurement strategy.

In this budget, why has the government decided to defer the \$3 billion earmarked for various Canadian Forces procurement projects?

• (1605)

[English]

Mr. David Wilks: Mr. Speaker, our armed forces are dealt with very well. I am proud that my son serves in the armed forces, and I am very proud of the fact that he served overseas as well.

We have provided some of the best equipment for our soldiers to ensure that when they go overseas to protect our rights as Canadians, we have taken care of them. We will continue to ensure that this happens.

[Translation]

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to begin by saying that I will be sharing my time with the member for Nickel Belt.

I am pleased to rise in the House to speak on behalf of the people of Gatineau. I had the pleasure of spending the entire week last week consulting people in my riding in order to determine if the government's budget addressed their concerns.

My remarks will touch on three key points. I will begin with some general observations. I will then talk more specifically about the economic situation in my riding, Gatineau. Then, if I have time—10 minutes is not very long—I will talk about the Department of Justice, since I am the justice critic for the official opposition, the NDP.

I want to make a general observation. When I was a little girl, my mother and father taught us how to budget. However, we did not do things the same way they are done here. My father asked us what was important to us, what we liked and how much money we had saved up. Then, he told us how we could spend that money. It was not a piecemeal approach, as it always seems to be here. I am always shocked to see that.

We start with a real brick, what I call the government's sentimental picture, which allows the Conservatives to go around and give the impression that they are taking care of the things that the real world is concerned about.

The government runs advertising that is sometimes empty but nice to look at. On television, during the Olympics, it looked good and gave the impression that the government was doing something.

First there is the budget. Then there is the budget bill, which people have more difficulty understanding and which I often call the *pièce de résistance*. It comes from the Conservative government, which as usual introduces an omnibus bill that changes tons of legislation.

The Budget

There are also the main estimates, which will be tabled at a given time. Technically, they should more or less fit with the budget speech and flesh it out. The Standing Committee on Justice and Human Rights will study them next week.

I think the supplementary estimates are like getting to the end of the year and realizing there is not enough money because of poor budgeting. Adjustments are made, which takes more money.

What fascinates me about the parliamentary process in this magnificent Canadian building is how everything is done piecemeal. It is sometimes very difficult to link it all together. That is what I tried to do.

I will now speak briefly about the economic situation in the riding of Gatineau and the greater national capital region.

I was absolutely flabbergasted this morning to read an article by James Bagnall in *The Ottawa Citizen* that basically confirmed what I was saying. Some said I was a prophet of doom, since the cuts in the region were now done.

I will read a few excerpts from the article I read this morning.

[*English*]

The National Capital Region will trail nearly all of Canada's largest cities in economic growth this year...according to a forecast published Wednesday [not by the NDP but] by the Conference Board of Canada.

The Ottawa independent think tank said the region continues to suffer from the unexpectedly deep pruning of public servants—a sector that accounts for 30 per cent of its economic activity.

[*Translation*]

I say this because it is important. People in the region are often almost embarrassed to talk about the economic driver of the national capital region. It goes without saying, because the Parliament of Canada is located in the national capital region. It is our own public service, the service to the public, all the departments that help and serve the public.

● (1610)

[*English*]

The number of jobs in public administration fell nearly nine per cent in 2013

[*Translation*]

That is huge.

[*English*]

The number of jobs in public administration fell nearly nine per cent in 2013—the “fastest rate on record”—and the Conference Board expects a further, albeit small drop this year.

[*Translation*]

I have said many times that we must not think that there will be an end to the pain in the greater national capital region this year. Today, I read some Twitter posts, including those of the brilliant President of the Treasury Board, where he threatened the Federal Superannuates National Association by saying that the association should negotiate and resolve any differences or else the government would impose new conditions on the organization by passing legislation. This ties in a bit with the trend of hitting the heart of the greater national capital region's economy.

The government is not content to merely go after our public service and the people who put their hearts and souls into providing services with far fewer staff members than before, particularly since the public service has still not completely recovered from the cuts the Liberals made in the 1990s. The government is going after the people it let go after they provided years of good and faithful services to Canadians and the federal government. It is telling them that the conditions it agreed upon with them no longer apply because it wants to change the rules.

That is like calling someone up to tell them that you are changing the contract you signed with them because you changed your mind. That is not usually done. It is completely indecent. I have a feeling that the Federal Superannuates National Association will have something to say to the minister about this.

These are things that I heard when I was in my riding last week. I met with hundreds of people—I am not just pulling that figure out of the air—and they shared with me their vision for the economy and their opinion of the federal budget that was tabled the previous week. When I listen to my Conservative colleagues speak about the budget in the House, I get the impression that they are living on a different planet from the one inhabited by our hard-working constituents who do not often get a break. The ministers and Conservative backbenchers talk about 165 budget cuts, but no one in my riding told me that they feel richer since the Conservatives took office, and they certainly do not feel richer after having seen this budget.

According to the Conference Board of Canada, if the cuts are not too serious, there may be some economic growth, but this is not a very rosy picture of my region. That is a point I wanted to make since, ironically, the article was published this morning.

I looked carefully at the budget, and some sections interested me much more than others, because they affected Canadians in their everyday lives. For example, the budget talks about investing in families. In my riding, a group called Logement/Occupe is working very hard to ensure affordable housing. This group went through a near-crisis because it did not know whether it was going to be eligible for the HPS program.

Many community organizations provide incredible services that we could not even afford as a society. Without them, the country would be bankrupt big time. We already have a deficit. Imagine if we had to pay for what all those community organizations do for our people. It would be overwhelming.

The Conservatives may be able to live well knowing that children go hungry and people have no roof over their heads, but I think this is a deplorable failure for a society. There are various needs.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord.

There is not much in the budget for justice. The government added a few extra judges here and there—way to go—but some existing positions have not been filled yet. I wonder how serious the government is. When it fleshes out the budget plan, the government should think about the basic needs for home care and caregivers. It must address these needs.

The Budget

•(1615)

I will elaborate on that some other time. Those were some of my thoughts on the 400 or so pages of nothing that I read last week.

[*English*]

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member is correct when she points out that the Liberals cut \$25 billion in transfers in the 1990s and that the cuts caused the provinces a great deal of difficulty in providing the services that fell within their jurisdiction. However, the member is equally making a mistake by not acknowledging the fact that under the new Conservative government, transfers to the provinces are at record highs. In fact, we will balance the budget in a way that does not affect those transfer payments in a very difficult economic environment. We are also investing huge, history-making sums in infrastructure.

Why is the member against the infrastructure investments when everyone else is in favour of them?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Mr. Speaker, I will start by talking about transfers.

In my opinion, claiming that there has not been a reduction in transfers to the provinces is also part of the Conservatives' dream. Freezing transfers while health care costs continue to rise obviously puts pressure on provincial budgets. However, the Conservative government brags that it has not reduced the transfer amounts. These repercussions are very real.

As for infrastructure spending, my colleague from Toronto, who is sitting to my right, is doing a fantastic job of making the government aware of the overwhelming infrastructure needs.

Furthermore, the day after the budget was tabled, the mayor of the City of Gatineau said that, for his city, the budget was disappointing on a number of counts, including in terms of infrastructure. The mayors of major cities had high expectations. If you walk around Gatineau, it is obvious that the infrastructure needs are enormous.

I do not believe that the government is doing enough. I think that it can do much better and that the government's funding for infrastructure will not solve the problems and address the enormous infrastructure deficit.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, during the early 1990s, I was part of the Manitoba legislature when health care was a hot issue of debate. The concern back in the early 1990s, at least in Manitoba, was that there were financial arrangements that saw tax point shifts favouring outright cash donations or equalization coming from Ottawa.

What the Chrétien government did was to establish a base and commitment for cash transfers. That is something that was of absolutely critical importance for anyone who believed in a national health care system. I was there. I was a part of that debate inside the Manitoba legislature.

We need to then fast forward. The record high health care dollars that are going into the system today are because of a health care

agreement that was achieved by Paul Martin. We have more health care dollars than ever before because of that agreement. That agreement expires this year.

Would the member not, at the very least, acknowledge that it is critically important for all Canadians that the government takes this issue seriously, and that it meet and negotiate another health care agreement that would continue to show a strong federal presence in health care? This is something that I believe all Canadians want.

•(1620)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Françoise Boivin: Mr. Speaker, the questions are so short. They could be the topic of an entire dissertation.

As for the 1990s cuts to health and education—what are called social transfers—if we talk to the Canadian provinces, they will say that they never recovered from them.

In the 1990s, the Liberals, under their minister of finance at the time, balanced their budget because lower interest rates helped them and because they slashed transfers to the provinces. Once again, this was done at the expense of Canadians, and it involved the most crucial services, like health and education.

Now I am being told by a Liberal MP that health and education are important issues to the Liberals, when they blithely made cuts to them in the 1990s. I always find that a bit disingenuous, but we are used to it and we live with it.

Do we need a serious agreement to fix the situation? There must be no going through the motions or band-aid solutions, as in the 10-year agreement, which did not necessarily address wait times, contrary to expectations at the time. This is urgent. Health is the priority for Canadians.

* * *

[*English*]

BOARD OF INTERNAL ECONOMY

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order, please. Before we resume debate, I have the honour to inform the House that Mr. LeBlanc, the member for the electoral district of Beauséjour, has been appointed a member of the Board of Internal Economy in the place of Ms. Foote, the member for the electoral district of Random—Burin—St. George's. This is for the purposes and under the provisions of section 50 of the Parliament of Canada Act.

[*Translation*]

The hon. member for Chicoutimi—Le Fjord has the floor. He will have 10 minutes for his speech, followed by questions and comments.

* * *

THE BUDGET

FINANCIAL STATEMENT OF MINISTER OF FINANCE

The House resumed consideration of the motion that this House approve in general the budgetary policy of the government.

The Budget

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, you know how much we members of Parliament like to talk. We just want to make sure that we can say everything we have to say in our allotted time.

In this case, I have 10 minutes to talk about the budget. This budget is quite a brick, despite the fact that it has no substance, especially for my region of Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean. For two and a half years, I have been the proud representative of the riding of Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, whose electoral boundaries will change in 2015. Of course, if you are from that region, whether you are from Saguenay or Lac-Saint-Jean, you are very proud of the region. We are a close-knit community. What affects the people at the far end of Lac-Saint-Jean also affects the people in the Lower Saguenay.

As I said, the people in my region—ordinary citizens, journalists who analyzed the budget, interest groups, community groups and some workers' groups—all had their eyes on the Conservatives' 2014 federal budget. Unfortunately, the consensus is that this budget is just treading water. In fact, it is practically an optional budget since it has nothing new.

The reality is that my region, Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean, is a resource-rich region. In some sectors, seasonal work is very important. I am referring to forestry, for example. My region is also a major aluminum producer. Economic activity is floundering right now because of the market price for aluminum. Projects to develop, renovate and upgrade aluminum-related infrastructure are all being delayed. Investments in construction, labour and maintenance are being pushed back. These investments would allow business to go further, expand and take a share of the market.

I am not here to explain what economic growth is. My colleagues already know what it is. Unfortunately, we are facing this problem. We talked about it in my region in January. Analysts in my region said that economic growth in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean would not be very strong in 2014. When growth is weak there is less chance that new jobs will be created for those looking for work in their field, because the economy is flat.

I talked about the aluminum sector, but it is not the only sector floundering right now. Forestry is an economic sector that employs a huge number of people, or at least it used to. My region still has not recovered from the forestry crisis it went through. I know that the government entered into the softwood lumber agreement with the United States. That agreement allows a certain volume of our Canadian wood, our wood from my region, to be sold. However, ultimately it is not enough.

People in forestry were expecting a lot from the federal budget. I am not talking about little announcements here and there that end up not changing much of anything. They might protect some of what we have, which is good, but a government has to be visionary. It has to think of everyone.

I have stood up a number of times in the House to decry the Conservative government's tactics, which I consider to be partisan. I think that some Conservative ridings are favoured at the expense of others. I have often said that I believe that my region is being abandoned by the government.

The 2014 federal budget would have been a great opportunity to prove me wrong. Unfortunately, it actually confirmed my fears that the Conservative government has abandoned our region. Part of my region is even represented by a Conservative minister, and the people I represent are seriously disappointed. When they talk to me about that minister, who is supposed to represent our region within his government, they say that the reverse is true. He represents the government, the Conservative Party, and does not listen to the people.

Consider the example of the employment insurance reform. It is not working and instead is having a terrible impact on the economy of my region, which is a resource-rich region.

• (1625)

Canada's rural areas, whose industries may not be in demand right now, are suffering. All of my colleagues who represent such ridings can confirm this.

The unemployment rate is rising. Over the past few months, employment insurance has been getting harder and harder to access. People want to leave their seasonal jobs, even though they really love those jobs. For some people, it has been more like a career, since they have been working in those industries for 30 years. However, this does not necessarily concern sectors like forestry. I am talking more about areas that are suffering indirect consequences.

For instance, I spoke to a man from Chicoutimi who has operated a business in the construction industry for 35 years. He repairs roofs. He employs a large team, but unfortunately, he is afraid of losing his employees who have 10, 15 or 20 years of experience in his business. In the past, he had no problem guaranteeing his employees enough hours, and his employees were never harassed by Service Canada.

I am not blaming Service Canada officials. My office is located right above theirs, and I have an excellent relationship with them. I am aware, however, that in the public service, people receive orders from their superiors, who in turn are simply obeying the deputy ministers and ministers, who are doing the Prime Minister's bidding. Basically, I am not blaming public servants; the situation reflects this government's lack of openness.

Our economy in Saguenay—Lac-Saint-Jean needs certain things. There are certain things the government could do or could continue to do in the forestry sector. For example, funding the Lac-Saint-Jean Model Forest in Mashteuiatsh, which is in the riding of the member for Roberval—Lac-Saint-Jean, was a good initiative by the federal government, and I do not often say that. Unfortunately, the government is going to completely cut federal funding. The model forest helped us find innovative ways to revitalize forest products. Unfortunately it is being abandoned.

Earlier I mentioned that we needed to be visionaries in how we see things. We cannot be micromanaging things, especially at the federal level. We need to adopt some macro-economic approaches. In the forestry sector, we know that we cut wood that is sent elsewhere for secondary and tertiary processing. Then we buy the products back. We get all the finished products. We have the necessary expertise here in Canada to have a great secondary and tertiary processing production chain and to stimulate our domestic economy. For that to happen, the government needs to help the small players.

The government needs to provide financial assistance. That means not cutting the budget for the model forest in Mashteuiatsh as of April 1. The model forest has financial partners all over the region. Financial assistance for a project has repercussions on businesses all over the region and in the forest sector. These are changes that will have a huge impact.

Mayors in my riding also told me that they were disappointed with the lack of assistance through the building Canada fund. There is a lot of recycled money. We know that small municipalities are being strangled. I am not talking about big municipalities that have a significant budget because of the gas tax, but small municipalities. I am thinking about municipalities with 500 residents. We are not talking about a lot of money, when they have a hard time providing basic services to residents. I am talking about water services, sewage treatment and decent roads for drivers. Small municipalities obviously cannot do it all. We cannot tell them to choose one priority for the next four years and wait for the rest. That is not how it works, because in the meantime the basic services are falling into disrepair.

I would have liked to have some help for our small municipalities that need to update their waste water treatment plants. In my beautiful region, there are a number of these municipalities that currently do not have financial resources and are discharging their waste water into the Saguenay Fjord—therefore into the Saguenay-St. Lawrence Marine Park. The park is co-managed by the provincial and federal governments and so the federal government does have a role to play.

I have a lot to say. Unfortunately, my time is up and so I await your questions.

•(1630)

[English]

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this budget deals with virtually all the challenges, one way or another, that we face as Canadians. There is money for students, there is a job creation program, and there is money for infrastructure; and it is the infrastructure that I would like to talk about.

The day after the budget was announced, more details came out about the building Canada fund and the fact that it was the largest sum of money invested in Canadian infrastructure in Canadian history. In this fund, there are different components. Contrary to what this member and other members have implied, the municipalities were thrilled with this budget, in particular the gas tax transfer, which is going straight from Ottawa to the municipalities. It is permanent and indexed. Why is the member against such as a great program?

The Budget

[Translation]

Mr. Dany Morin: Mr. Speaker, there is a minor misunderstanding. I never said that I was against the return of the gas tax. In my speech, I specifically said that, unfortunately, that was not enough.

Let us look at an actual example. Perhaps the municipalities and mayors in his riding see things differently. I will talk about a real example in my riding of Sainte-Rose-du-Nord, a small village of 500 people.

With the return of the gas tax for four years—it is supposed to be in effect for four years—my riding will receive \$500,000 from the federal government to cover all the basic needs of a small municipality. I have already mentioned waterworks, roads and waste water treatment.

Unfortunately, Sainte-Rose-du-Nord is one of the municipalities that discharges its waste water into the fjord. A waste water treatment plant in Sainte-Rose would cost \$5 million. Can someone explain to me how a small municipality, even with each party providing one third of funding, can afford a \$5 million waste water treatment plant with \$500,000 over four years? It cannot be done.

I have just shown that the member opposite is wrong.

•(1635)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on the issue of Canada Post. Canada Post provides a multitude of services to small businesses, and we all know that small businesses contribute immensely to our economy, in particular contributions to the middle class and beyond. One of the decisions that it has made is to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Order. The hon. member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia is rising on a point of order.

Hon. Steven Fletcher: Mr. Speaker, today we are debating the budget. Canada Post is an arm's length crown corporation. The budget is quite separate from Canada Post. I wonder if the member could keep his comments to the debate at hand, which is the budget.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I thank the hon. member for his intervention. While I recognize budget matters cover a fairly broad spread of various issues that come before the House, I am not certain that the particular question that is in front of the House concerns the specifics relating to Canada Post.

I will let the hon. member for Winnipeg North finish his question. I am sure he might have something in there about the budget.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker, the budget has a serious impact on small businesses. Canada Post is a crown corporation, which is associated with the Government of Canada. The impact of the decisions made by Canada Post, which the government has affirmed, is going to be a negative impact on small businesses all across Canada. It is definitely a relevant question. The impact is going to be felt in different ways. One impact is going to be on jobs, whether it is the jobs of letter carriers or manufacturers of paper products. I have heard from individuals in Quebec and Manitoba related to both of those types of jobs.

The Budget

My question to the member is this. Does he share the opinion that there will be a negative impact on the economy due to the increases in cost of postal services?

[*Translation*]

Mr. Dany Morin: Mr. Speaker, that is a good question, especially considering the fact that a budget is a matter of priority.

I expect the federal government to put the best conditions on the table so that our small, medium and large businesses have the best conditions for doing business in Canada. Obviously, that includes a Canadian postal service. Unfortunately, that service will become more deficient than it was before. With the changes the Conservatives are making, Canada Post will be crippled.

I am referring to the small businesses that will be affected by the changes being made to Canada Post, including the Saguenay chamber of commerce. I fully support the Saguenay chamber of commerce, which is currently holding consultations in the three boroughs of Saguenay, and even in the Lower Saguenay, to see whether the budget meets our small business owners' expectations or not.

In the preliminary meetings that I had with these representatives, they told me that things did not look very promising so far. The changes being made to Canada Post will certainly be included in their recommendations. We will likely have to go back to what we had before, when we had a very strong postal system.

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a great opportunity to get up and speak on the budget.

I am very pleased to split my time with my hon. friend from Kildonan—St. Paul, a hard-working MP who does tremendous work on ending human trafficking.

I would like to address my comments specifically to three major imperatives that this budget helps to address, not only from the standpoint of the Canadian economy but also New Brunswick and eastern Canada as well.

The first imperative is the opportunity in the resource sector, which is especially important for New Brunswick. However, I also want to stress the importance of dealing with some pending issues in the resource sector, specifically in the forestry industry. This is a major issue now impacting Quebec and southern Ontario, and fairly soon New Brunswick and the rest of eastern Canada as well.

The second imperative concerns the infrastructure for supporting our businesses, especially our small businesses and communities. I would like to talk a little about the imperatives from an infrastructure standpoint of assets, as well as the most important asset, which is developing our people to fill the jobs that we are going to need in the future.

The third imperative is reducing the challenges and costs to small business with respect to our regulatory burden.

First, on some of the major investments in the forestry sector, I was very pleased to see us continue with our investment in the forestry industry's transformation, which is very important. It leverages what we have done in the past with respect to the pulp

and paper green transformation fund, a fund that has helped a lot of our pulp mills not only improve their processes but also decrease their environmental footprint.

It is great that the forestry industry has such innovation, especially in some cases in New Brunswick with the innovation there in some of our hardwood products. However, it is important to stress that we need this industry and we need the trees to help it, which is why I was so pleased to see an investment of \$18 million to proactively combat the spruce budworm.

If we look back to the 1970s, about 30 years ago in Atlantic Canada and northern Maine, somewhere in the order of 50 million hectares was impacted by the spruce budworm, which has a cyclical pattern and is now coming back. It has come down through Quebec. It is near the New Brunswick border, and in some cases in northern New Brunswick at this point in time.

There is almost 7.2 million hectares of forest land in the province of New Brunswick and almost half of that, 3.1 million hectares, is susceptible to the spruce budworm. The challenge is that the spruce budworm could devastate the industry because the trees it infects become unusable. Therefore, we are looking at getting in at the front end and investing in a program to help disrupt the mating patterns of the spruce budworm, which will allow us to target specific spraying in the areas that will need it when the pest arrives.

It is interesting to look back at what it cost to have the last spraying program, not to ignore the fact that they used fenitrothion back then, a chemical not approved by Health Canada today. In the absence of a proactive strategy, it is estimated that we would probably go through eight to ten years of spraying, costing somewhere in the order of \$400 million to \$600 million. A spraying program that large is not something that provinces and governments could undertake, not to mention that a lot of the planes we used for the spraying program a number of years ago are no longer available. Therefore, this is an important aspect to make sure that we continue not only to help our businesses innovate but also to have the forest products there for them.

The third aspect is the opportunity in the resource sector. Given new Brunswick's financial situation, it will be pursuing some resource-based industries, and, as everyone is quite aware, the energy east pipeline.

● (1640)

This is a significant investment that is potentially coming to New Brunswick. When the announcement was made for the pipeline, which would carry 1.1 million barrels a day, not only was the oil important but also the initial investment that Irving was talking about, an extra \$400 million to \$500 million for a terminal, as well as the employment it would create. Those are great spinoffs for us. The \$28 million the budget proposes for the NEB to review these projects is very important.

The Budget

As far as creating the infrastructure is concerned, I am very pleased with the budget. We see tremendous opportunities in Canada. Here I would just give the example of persons with disabilities. There are about 800,000 people out there with disabilities who would love to work but probably have no place to work at this point in time. This is a huge untapped potential for the Canadian economy. Therefore, the \$200 million in the budget for the labour market development agreements to develop that resource is tremendous for us.

In addition, the \$1.5 billion Canada first research excellence fund and the accelerator and incubator funds are going to be important for small businesses to innovate and generate new ideas so that we can create employment. As many members from Atlantic Canada would know, especially in New Brunswick, about 90% of our businesses have less than 10 employees. There is a very entrepreneurial spirit. Therefore, that type of investment continues to be very important for us.

The other items I would like to talk about are broadband, and the long-term infrastructure plan, specifically the gas tax, which would be made more flexible to allow communities to invest for the long-term, allowing them to plan and count on those dollars.

The last piece I would like to talk about is reducing the burden for small and medium-size business. As I indicated, a number of these small businesses are very much alive and well in New Brunswick. Reducing red tape in the CRA and the 800,000 remittances that small businesses have to submit, and having an impact on almost 50,000 of these businesses via the budget, will be of real help. I say this because at the end of the day, many of them do not have people devoted to paperwork. They do not have the resources to devote to those types of things. It is very important that this save them money to actually invest in other parts of their business.

I would also like to talk about internal trade. Recently in a state of the province address, the Premier of New Brunswick commented on internal trade. He thought that our signing the CETA deal was actually easier than our dealing with internal trade within Canada. I think he is absolutely right, and so we need to continue to work cooperatively with the provinces on that.

My third point is about tax simplification. I was very pleased to see the minister talk in the budget about introducing legislation that would simplify the tax system from the standpoint of all of the unlegislated tax measures out there that governments have not implemented. It would be shameless self-promotion for me to say that some of that was based on Bill C-549, my private member's bill. I am very pleased that the minister put that in the budget for us to address.

Before I close, I would point out that we owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to our volunteer community. There are a couple of things I would like to point out here that I think are very important. There is the tax credit for search and rescue people. Here I would note the tremendous group at the York Sunbury Ground Search and Rescue, which I know the member for Fredericton is very knowledgeable about. There is also Tobique Ground Search and Rescue in my riding. They have done a tremendous amount of work and a lot of volunteering to keep our communities going.

I would be remiss not to point out our recreational fisheries conservation partnership, which has allowed a lot of our conservation groups, including the Miramichi Salmon Association and other organizations, to undertake very important work on the river system in order to preserve and improve fish habitat.

The budget has created and dealt with three imperatives: the opportunities in New Brunswick, how to set out infrastructure in terms of people and assets to make those opportunities happen, and how to get out of the way so that small businesses can actually get their work done.

• (1645)

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the member talked about infrastructure, and there is no doubt we are in crisis after six or seven years of Conservative government. The Federation of Canadian Municipalities evaluates that crisis in infrastructure development at about \$170 billion. There is no doubt there is huge economic fallout from that.

It means a lower quality of life for Canadians right across the country. It also means bridges with cracks that cannot be used anymore, like the Champlain Bridge. There is a whole range of places across the country, like New Westminster, for example, where the railway bridge, which needs to be replaced and has needed to be replaced for years, is not being replaced. There is a \$170 billion deficit, and we have a government that very cynically put forward a budget and, wait for this, the sum total of the infrastructure funding provided for this upcoming fiscal year is \$200 million. That means that, when we look at the overall scope of needs, the government is spending money on its pet projects rather than spending money where it counts: developing infrastructure and contributing to economic well-being.

My question is simple. When we see the tragedy of the Champlain Bridge and the impact on the greater Montreal area, when we see the railway bridge in the Lower Mainland of British Columbia is not being replaced, and when we see Conservatives wanting to withhold all that infrastructure funding to make some announcements during the election campaign, but only providing \$200 million in the next fiscal year, how can the member support that cynical approach to budgeting, which leaves Canadians across the country far short?

• (1650)

Mr. Mike Allen: Mr. Speaker, actually the infrastructure program is \$53 billion, with a long-term gas tax commitment to the communities in the budget. Also the bridge work is part of the building Canada fund, and also the minister of transport and infrastructure has actually had those negotiations in place with the provinces to actually see this money flowing.

When I talk in my riding, municipalities are very pleased with aspects of these commitments that have been made: the long-term predictability of the funds they are going to get, and the usage of them, not to mention the flexibility of the funds. The other side of it is the commitment to a disaster infrastructure fund, which is going to be key for communities like Hartland and Perth-Andover, a couple of my communities that were impacted by flooding.

The Budget

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce published a report. At the beginning of the report there is a letter signed by Perrin Beatty, a fairly prominent Canadian who served in cabinet for both Brian Mulroney and Joe Clark. I would like the member to provide comment on a quote from this letter:

Canada is struggling to stay competitive. In fact, our country's ability to remain a leader among nations is stagnating. For the second consecutive year, the World Economic Forum ranked Canada 14th in global economic competitiveness—down two places from 2011 and sliding five places since 2009.

I wonder if the member would want to provide comment on what Mr. Beatty had to say in the Canadian Chamber of Commerce report.

Mr. Mike Allen: Mr. Speaker, obviously we have wealth that is growing. The OECD said we were the second best place to do business in the world, so that is obviously a ranking that has come up. Do we have to invest in innovation and other things to make us more productive? Absolutely, we do.

What I find very compelling is that we put this money into these research type activities, including in the automotive sector and others. We put in a \$1.5 billion Canada first research excellence fund; we put accelerators and incubator funds in place; and the member votes against everything. We are not going to come back if the member keeps voting against everything.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to rise in this House today to speak about this budget.

I want to speak about my wonderful riding of Kildonan—St. Paul because a lot of these things in the budget really impact, in a very positive way, upon my riding.

I know in this House we have heard a lot of talk about all of Canada, because we know that Canada is in the best possible position of any country in the world. People are working. Jobs are being created. There is money to improve infrastructure, health care transfers, and the social transfers. We are in a place where people can live, grow, prosper, and feel secure that, in this country, their families will be able to live a very good life. I know that all depends, too, upon the people themselves, whether or not they have taken the time to hone their skills and do their due diligence for their families. That is the other variable.

However, this government has produced a budget over the last eight years that has really impacted in a very positive way upon the economy in our country.

At one point, over the last decade, we have gone through a recession and our country stood firm and tall in terms of maintaining a stable economy.

Looking at the global picture, in my province of Manitoba, there has just been a growth in the transfers to the province of Manitoba. It is almost \$3.4 billion in 2014-15. That is a whopping 24% increase from the previous Liberal government.

I know the member on the other side of the House has said, several times, that there is a shortage of this and a shortage of that. He needs to look at the world situation. Canada, now, is best-positioned under this government to grow and prosper, and it has done very well.

The building Canada plan, a \$53-billion investment in predictable infrastructure funding for the next 10 years, is the largest and longest federal investment in job-creating infrastructure in Canadian history.

Now, as members know, the job of opposition members is to criticize everything that goes on in the country, especially criticizing those who are in government. That is their job. I appreciate that.

However, those same members enjoy, in this country, a very stable life in which they, their families, and their children have job opportunities and opportunities for improvements in their communities.

Even though I appreciate that it is their job to criticize, when we look at the whole picture, not only globally but here in Canada, as I said, we are positioned very well.

I know the member for Winnipeg North is a member from Manitoba and I know that, of course, it is the member's job to criticize, as I said.

However, Manitoba is in a very good position, now, because of the transfers that are going forward. For Manitoba, the total major transfers will total almost \$3 billion or \$4 billion in the years 2014 and 2015.

I want to expand on that a bit because the major transfers impact on a lot of things. There is almost \$1.8 billion through equalization. That is an increase of \$149 million, almost 9%, since 2005-06 under the former Liberal government; so today, Manitoba has a lot more benefits and a lot more opportunities than it did under the former government.

●(1655)

Let us talk about the Canada health transfer. Almost \$1.2 billion through the Canada health transfer is an increase of \$371 million, or 47%—almost 50%—since 2005-06 under the former Liberal government. I am speaking about this because I have heard today, over and over again from members opposite, about how things are going badly; but in actual fact, we have a lot to be grateful for and a lot to work with.

I also want to talk about the Canada social transfer. There is \$453 million through that transfer, which is an increase of \$120 million, or almost 36%, since 2005-06 under the former Liberal government. Things have improved a lot since that time.

Having said that, as we look at other things that impact on my riding of Kildonan—St. Paul, in Manitoba, and on Manitobans, there are many other things that have put people back to work and that have helped families put money directly into their pockets from tax savings. For instance, the launch of the Canada job grant was no small thing. Canadians need education and skills training to get in-demand jobs, so launching the Canada job grant was extremely helpful for people in all of our communities, not only in Manitoba but all across the country.

The Budget

What about the Canada apprentice loan? I was a teacher for 23 years. I know there are a lot of students who wanted to go into the trades, but there was nothing for them. Now, under our government, they would have the Canada apprentice loan, which would provide apprentices in Red Seal trades access to over \$100 million in interest free loans every year. The fact that these would be interest free loans means so much to these students and apprentices.

What about small business? The previous member talked in his speech about the red tape and all the things that have to happen for small business. Our government has cut 800,000 payroll remittances for approximately 50,000 businesses. Small business is the search engine of our country. It is the mom and pop shops that are creative. They grow and create business, and it is very exciting to see them make a living with their own creativity. Our government wanted to help them, and that was a great help for them.

We talk about research and innovation. I have to say that, going through nine years of university, the research that was involved in that was very important. Research and innovation are what start new businesses and initiatives. We would commit over \$1.5 billion over the next decade for research in universities through the Canada first research excellence fund.

It is not only dealing with the very practical things. It is also dealing with the research and innovative things that Canadians are so famous for, such as supporting families. We have given many tax breaks for families. There is over \$3,000 in the pockets of every family right now because of the tax relief for families. In addition to that, many families adopt children, and we have expanded the tax relief for families adopting a child.

We have also expanded the tax relief for health related services and done very practical things, like capping wholesale wireless rates to make service more affordable. All of these are the kinds of things that people do not talk about a great deal, but they impact on their families at home every single day.

I am very proud to be able to speak in favour of this budget, not because I am on this side of the House but because it works. It would make lives better for everyday Canadians like us. Standing up for the victims of crime has also been a part of that.

● (1700)

I could go through many examples. I will try to do that as I answer the questions.

I have to congratulate the people on this side of the House and the Prime Minister for the great work on this budget.

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I paid close attention to what my colleague had to contribute to this debate.

I am afraid that in my riding, small businesses are not as enthusiastic about this budget, particularly chambers of commerce. For example, the elimination of the tax credit for hiring is something they were fundamentally looking for. Unfortunately, the riding of Pontiac is one of the ridings in Quebec that has the toughest time when it comes to jobs. The people in my riding are quite discouraged that this budget does not do enough to stimulate jobs, particularly in rural areas like the Pontiac.

Another factor is how this budget has attacked public servants in my riding and in the ridings around Ottawa. I wonder what my hon. colleague would say to them.

● (1705)

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, I would like to draw a few things to the member's attention that might be helpful in his riding. For instance, the launching of the job-matching service in this budget is important when we talk about creating jobs.

The member opposite said that the chambers of commerce and organizations like that were not happy. My chamber of commerce is happy with the budget. There are initiatives such as a job-matching service, where Canadians looking for work can get that work, because there is a simple way of finding those jobs, or increasing paid internships for young Canadians by investing \$55 million to create paid internships for recent graduates. This is all part of what the chamber of commerce really appreciates. Those are initiatives that my chamber of commerce has said are excellent.

Perhaps if the member would put out the information, it would be helpful to those chambers of commerce and would help them build their job base within his riding.

Hon. Steven Fletcher (Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like the member to expand on the infrastructure program as well as on how our home province of Manitoba benefits from transfers from Ottawa and why a Conservative government is great for the entire country.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Speaker, I would be glad to give those kinds of examples.

Before the members on this side of the House and our government got into office, the gas tax transfers were shaky. They are now permanent and indexed so that municipalities across this great country can benefit. Why? It is because they are predictable. Large amounts go not only to the larger communities but to the smaller communities as well. In Manitoba, and in my riding of Kildonan—St. Paul, the municipalities are grateful for that. They can predict what will happen in the next year and can invest that money from the gas tax transfers in that. That was a huge investment in infrastructure in Canada.

On top of that, there has been a large amount of money put into infrastructure, such as the \$53 billion to make sure that roads, bridges, and infrastructure are in good repair.

When we look at other countries, there are many that cannot afford even the basics for infrastructure, whereas in this country, because of the permanent gas tax transfers and the monies that have been put into infrastructure, we can enjoy an expansion of infrastructure in all of our ridings.

[*Translation*]

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Before I recognize the hon. member for Alfred-Pellan, I must inform the House that there are five minutes left for the business of supply.

The hon. member for Alfred-Pellan.

The Budget

• (1710)

Ms. Rosane Doré Lefebvre (Alfred-Pellan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to the Conservatives' 2014 budget for the remaining five minutes.

We now have 300,000 more unemployed workers than we had before the recession, and the Conservative government is just marking time with the budget it tabled. While thousands of families struggle to make ends meet, the Conservatives are playing petty politics and postponing the major announcements until next year, an election year, as everyone knows.

Let us start with the environment. Wetlands are very important to many aspects of our environment. They serve as a natural filtration system for water, provide exceptional wildlife habitat and offer a better quality of life for Canadians. The federal government has a responsibility to protect our wetlands. Unfortunately, the 2014 federal budget does not contain a single measure to protect wetlands. Ducks Unlimited Canada had the following to say about this unreasonable situation:

The policies and actions of the federal government, implemented through a variety of federal agencies, have significant impacts on Canada's landscapes and the environment.

In recent federal budgets...no significant new money has been earmarked for conservation activities.

It is disturbing how unimportant the Conservatives seem to think our environment is. There is no mention of it in budget 2014, let alone of climate change. Everyone knows that the government's record on this issue is poor. It dropped the Kyoto protocol and the UN Convention to Combat Desertification. It cut funding for Canada's Experimental Lakes Area and gave tax breaks to big oil companies. These are just a few examples of the government's lack of leadership on climate change adaptation.

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities has been sounding the alarm about this for some time now:

Canada's infrastructure deficit is significant, and the ongoing impact of climate change is expected to increase this deficit by shortening asset-replacement cycles.

Climate-change adaptation could save Canadians billions of dollars, and position our economy to provide solutions for a challenge that will soon face communities around the world.

Unfortunately, there was no mention of climate change in the Conservatives' budget.

Next I would like to talk about infrastructure. On February 13, the Conservatives finally revealed the details of the 10-year building Canada fund, which was one of the biggest promises in the 2013 budget. However, the spending laid out for the first five years of the program adds up to \$5.8 billion less than infrastructure spending for 2013-14.

The Conservatives have made several announcements about the new building Canada fund since tabling budget 2013, but they have been unable to release the promised funds. Municipalities are now worried that they will have to just forget about this summer's construction season. Moreover, the delays are costing our communities thousands of jobs.

Laval was promised over \$31 million for a multi-use sports and culture complex in 2009. The Conservatives made a very big deal about that announcement. Later, the government quietly withdrew

from the project, sticking Quebec and the municipalities with the bill. Laval is not the only city this happened to.

The federal government is now refusing to fund sports infrastructure projects through the building Canada fund even though the municipalities are in desperate need of that money. Why were the municipalities not consulted about this?

The drastic cuts affect a great many areas. Unfortunately, I do not have enough time to speak to each of them. However, there will be an impact on seniors, the Canada job grant—which is extremely serious—and youth unemployment. There are 1.3 million unemployed Canadians, yet the budget contains no meaningful measures to address the issue. In January 2014, the unemployment rate was 5.7% in Laval. It was 7.5% in Quebec. These cuts will also have an impact on arts, culture and railway safety. In Laval, the trains travel through Saint-Vincent-de-Paul, Duvernay and Saint-François, right through our communities. That concerns people.

Since I do not have much time left and I need to cut my speech short, I would simply like to say that I am extremely disappointed to see that the Conservatives have shifted the focus of the HPS and did not increase its envelope. International co-operation is at a standstill.

To conclude, the NDP is proposing simple, practical, meaningful solutions that would provide some relief to families, such as capping ATM fees, cracking down on payday lenders, reining in credit card interest rates and bringing back the eco-energy home retrofit tax credit.

Canadians deserve better. They do not deserve a government that is just marking time, as the Conservatives are doing. In 2015, voters will have the opportunity to choose the NDP, who will fight for a fairer, greener, more prosperous country.

• (1715)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of Ways and Means Motion No. 6.

[*English*]

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

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

Some hon. members: Nay.

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

And five or more members having risen:

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): Call in the members.

● (1755)

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

(Division No. 66)

YEAS

Members

| | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| Ablonczy | Adams |
| Adler | Aglukkaq |
| Albas | Albrecht |
| Alexander | Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac) |
| Allison | Ambler |
| Ambrose | Anders |
| Anderson | Armstrong |
| Ashfield | Aspin |
| Bateman | Benoit |
| Bergen | Bernier |
| Bezan | Blaney |
| Block | Boughen |
| Braid | Breitkreuz |
| Brown (Newmarket—Aurora) | Brown (Barrie) |
| Bruinooge | Butt |
| Calandra | Cannan |
| Carmichael | Carrie |
| Chisu | Chong |
| Clarke | Clement |
| Crockatt | Daniel |
| Davidson | Dechert |
| Del Mastro | Devolin |
| Dreeshen | Duncan (Vancouver Island North) |
| Falk | Fantino |
| Findlay (Delta—Richmond East) | Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk) |
| Fletcher | Galipeau |
| Gallant | Glover |
| Goguen | Goldring |
| Goodyear | Gourde |
| Grewal | Harper |
| Harris (Cariboo—Prince George) | Hawn |
| Hayes | Hiebert |
| Hillyer | Hoback |
| Holder | James |
| Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission) | Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's) |
| Kenney (Calgary Southeast) | Kent |
| Kerr | Komarnicki |
| Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings) | Lake |
| Lauzon | Lebel |
| Leaf | Leitch |
| Lemieux | Leung |
| Lizon | Lobb |
| Lukiwski | Lunney |
| MacKay (Central Nova) | MacKenzie |
| Maguire | Mayes |
| McColeman | McLeod |
| Menegakis | Miller |
| Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam) | |
| Moore (Fundy Royal) | |
| Norlock | O'Connor |
| Oliver | O'Neill Gordon |
| Opitz | O'Toole |
| Paradis | Payne |
| Poilievre | Preston |
| Raitt | Rajotte |
| Rathgeber | Reid |
| Rempel | Richards |
| Rickford | Ritz |
| Saxton | Schellenberger |
| Seeback | Shea |
| Shipley | Shory |
| Smith | Sopuck |
| Sorenson | Stanton |
| Storseth | Strahl |
| Sweet | Tilson |
| Toet | Trost |
| Trottier | Truppe |
| Uppal | Valcourt |
| Van Kesteren | Van Loan |
| Vellacott | Wallace |
| Warkentin | Watson |

Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilks
Wong
Young (Oakville)

Williamson
Woodworth
Zimmer — 148

The Budget

NAYS

Members

| | |
|--|-------------------------------------|
| Allen (Welland) | Andrews |
| Angus | Atamanenko |
| Aubin | Ayala |
| Bélangier | Bellavance |
| Bennett | Benskin |
| Bevington | Blanchette |
| Blanchette-Lamothe | Boivin |
| Borg | Boulerice |
| Boutin-Sweet | Brahmi |
| Brousseau | Byrne |
| Caron | Casey |
| Cash | Charlton |
| Chicoine | Chisholm |
| Choquette | Chow |
| Christopherson | Cleary |
| Comartin | Côté |
| Crowder | Cullen |
| Cuzner | Davies (Vancouver Kingsway) |
| Davies (Vancouver East) | Day |
| Dion | Dionne Labelle |
| Doré Lefebvre | Dubé |
| Dubourg | Duncan (Etobicoke North) |
| Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona) | Dusseauit |
| Easter | Eyking |
| Fortin | Freeland |
| Freeman | Fry |
| Garneau | Garrison |
| Genest | Giguère |
| Godin | Gravelle |
| Grogulé | Harris (Scarborough Southwest) |
| Harris (St. John's East) | Hsu |
| Hughes | Hyer |
| Jacob | Jones |
| Julian | Karygiannis |
| Kellway | Lamoureux |
| Lapointe | Larose |
| Latendresse | Laverdière |
| LeBlanc (Beauséjour) | LeBlanc (LaSalle—Énard) |
| Leslie | Liu |
| MacAulay | Mai |
| Marston | Martin |
| Mathysen | May |
| McCallum | McGuinty |
| Michaud | Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue) |
| Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord) | Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine) |
| Morin (Laurentides—Labelle) | Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot) |
| Mourani | Mulcair |
| Murray | Nantel |
| Nash | Nicholls |
| Nunez-Melo | Pacetti |
| Papillon | Patry |
| Péclet | Perreault |
| Pilon | Plamondon |
| Quach | Rafferty |
| Rankin | Ravignat |
| Raynault | Regan |
| Rousseau | Saganash |
| Scarpaleggia | Scott |
| Sellah | Sgro |
| Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor) | |
| Sitsabaesan | |
| St-Denis | Stewart |
| Sullivan | Toone |
| Tremblay | Trudeau |
| Turnel | Valeriote — 128 |

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

*Private Members' Business***PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

[Translation]

AFGHAN VETERANS MONUMENT

The House resumed from February 12 consideration of the motion.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on Motion No. 448 under private members' business, in the name of the hon. member for Palliser.

• (1805)

[English]

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

*(Division No. 67)***YEAS**

Members

| | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|
| Ablonczy | Adams |
| Adler | Aglukkaq |
| Albas | Albrecht |
| Alexander | Allen (Welland) |
| Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac) | Allison |
| Ambler | Ambrose |
| Anders | Anderson |
| Andrews | Angus |
| Armstrong | Ashfield |
| Aspin | Atamanenko |
| Aubin | Ayala |
| Bateman | Bélangier |
| Bellavance | Bennett |
| Benoit | Benskin |
| Bergen | Bernier |
| Bevington | Bezan |
| Blanchette | Blanchette-Lamothe |
| Blaney | Block |
| Boivin | Borg |
| Boughen | Boulerice |
| Boutin-Sweet | Brahmi |
| Braid | Breitkreuz |
| Brousseau | Brown (Newmarket—Aurora) |
| Brown (Barrie) | Bruinooge |
| Butt | Byrne |
| Calandra | Cannan |
| Carmichael | Caron |
| Carrie | Casey |
| Cash | Charlton |
| Chicoine | Chisholm |
| Chisu | Chong |
| Choquette | Chow |
| Christopherson | Clarke |
| Cleary | Clement |
| Comartin | Côté |
| Crockatt | Crowder |
| Cullen | Cuzner |
| Daniel | Davidson |
| Davies (Vancouver Kingsway) | Davies (Vancouver East) |
| Day | Dechert |
| Del Mastro | Devolin |
| Dion | Dionne Labelle |
| Doré Lefebvre | Dreeschen |
| Dubé | Dubourg |
| Duncan (Vancouver Island North) | Duncan (Etobicoke North) |
| Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona) | Dusseault |
| Easter | Eyking |
| Falk | Fantino |
| Findlay (Delta—Richmond East) | Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk) |
| Fletcher | Fortin |
| Freeland | Freeman |
| Fry | Galipeau |
| Gallant | Garneau |
| Garrison | Genest |
| Giguère | Glover |
| Godin | Goguen |

| | |
|---|---|
| Goldring | Goodyear |
| Gourde | Gravelle |
| Grewal | Groguhé |
| Harper | Harris (Scarborough Southwest) |
| Harris (St. John's East) | Harris (Cariboo—Prince George) |
| Hawn | Hayes |
| Hiebert | Hillyer |
| Hoback | Holder |
| Hsu | Hughes |
| Hyer | Jacob |
| James | Jones |
| Julian | Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission) |
| Karygiannis | Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's) |
| Kellway | Kenney (Calgary Southeast) |
| Kent | Kerr |
| Komarnicki | Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings) |
| Lake | Lamoureux |
| Lapointe | Larose |
| Latendresse | Lauzon |
| Laverdière | Label |
| LeBlanc (Beauséjour) | LeBlanc (LaSalle—Énard) |
| Leaf | Leitch |
| Lemieux | Leslie |
| Leung | Liu |
| Lizon | Lobb |
| Lukiwski | Lunney |
| MacAulay | MacKay (Central Nova) |
| MacKenzie | Maguire |
| Mai | Marston |
| Martin | Mathysen |
| May | Mayes |
| McCallum | McColeman |
| McGuinty | McLeod |
| Menegakis | Michaud |
| Miller | Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue) |
| Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam) | |
| Moore (Fundy Royal) | |
| Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord) | Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine) |
| Morin (Laurentides—Labelle) | Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot) |
| Mourani | Mulcair |
| Murray | Nantel |
| Nash | Nicholls |
| Norlock | Nunez-Melo |
| O'Connor | Oliver |
| O'Neill Gordon | Opitz |
| O'Toole | Pacetti |
| Papillon | Paradis |
| Patry | Payne |
| Péclet | Perreault |
| Pilon | Plamondon |
| Poilievre | Preston |
| Quach | Rafferty |
| Raitt | Rajotte |
| Rankin | Rathgeber |
| Ravignat | Raynault |
| Regan | Reid |
| Rempel | Richards |
| Rickford | Ritz |
| Rousseau | Saganash |
| Saxton | Scarpaleggia |
| Schellenberger | Scott |
| Seeback | Sellah |
| Sgro | Shea |
| Shipley | Shory |
| Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor) | |
| Sitsabaiesan | |
| Smith | Sopuck |
| Sorenson | Stanton |
| St-Denis | Stewart |
| Storseth | Strahl |
| Sullivan | Sweet |
| Tilson | Toet |
| Toone | Tremblay |
| Trost | Trottier |
| Trudeau | Truppe |
| Turmel | Uppal |
| Valcourt | Valeriotte |
| Van Kesteren | Van Loan |
| Vellacott | Wallace |
| Warkentin | Watson |
| Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country) | |
| Weston (Saint John) | |
| Wilks | Williamson |
| Wong | Woodworth |

Young (Oakville)

Zimmer— 276

NAYS

Nil

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

* * *

CBC AND PUBLIC SERVICE DISCLOSURE AND TRANSPARENCY ACT

The House resumed from February 13 consideration of Bill C-461, An Act to amend the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act (disclosure of information), as reported (with amendments) from the committee, and of the motions in Group No.1.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motions at report stage of Bill C-461 under private members' business.

• (1810)

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

(Division No. 68)

YEAS

Members

| | |
|--------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Allen (Welland) | Andrews |
| Angus | Atamanenko |
| Aubin | Ayala |
| Bélanger | Bellavance |
| Bennett | Benskin |
| Bevington | Blanchette |
| Blanchette-Lamothe | Boivin |
| Borg | Boulerice |
| Boutin-Sweet | Brahmi |
| Brosseau | Byrne |
| Caron | Casey |
| Cash | Charlton |
| Chicoine | Chisholm |
| Chong | Choquette |
| Chow | Christopherson |
| Cleary | Comartin |
| Côté | Crowder |
| Cullen | Cuzner |
| Davies (Vancouver Kingsway) | Davies (Vancouver East) |
| Day | Dion |
| Dionne Labelle | Doré Lefebvre |
| Dubé | Dubourg |
| Duncan (Etobicoke North) | Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona) |
| Dusseault | Easter |
| Eyking | Fortin |
| Freeland | Freeman |
| Fry | Garneau |
| Garrison | Genest |
| Giguère | Godin |
| Gravelle | Grogulé |
| Harris (Scarborough Southwest) | Harris (St. John's East) |
| Hsu | Hughes |
| Hyer | Jacob |
| Jones | Julian |
| Karygiannis | Kellway |
| Lamoureux | Lapointe |
| Larose | Latendresse |
| Laverdière | LeBlanc (Beauséjour) |
| LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard) | Leslie |
| Liu | MacAulay |
| Mai | Marston |
| Martin | Mathysen |
| May | McCallum |
| McGuinty | Michaud |

Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nicholls
Pacetti
Patry
Perreault
Plamondon
Rafferty
Rathgeber
Raynault
Rousseau
Scarpaleggia
Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Sitsabaiesan
St-Denis
Sullivan
Tremblay
Turmel

Private Members' Business

Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mourani
Murray
Nash
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Péclet
Pilon
Quach
Rankin
Ravignat
Regan
Saganash
Scott
Sgro
Stewart
Toone
Trudeau
Valeriote— 130

NAYS

Members

| | |
|------------------------------------|--|
| Ablonczy | Adams |
| Adler | Aglukkaq |
| Albas | Albrecht |
| Alexander | Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac) |
| Allison | Ambler |
| Ambrose | Anders |
| Anderson | Armstrong |
| Ashfield | Aspin |
| Bateman | Benoit |
| Bergen | Bernier |
| Bezan | Blaney |
| Block | Boughen |
| Braid | Breitkreuz |
| Brown (Newmarket—Aurora) | Brown (Barrie) |
| Bruinooge | Butt |
| Calandra | Cannan |
| Carmichael | Carrie |
| Chisu | Clarke |
| Clement | Crockatt |
| Daniel | Davidson |
| Dechert | Del Mastro |
| Devolin | Dreeshen |
| Duncan (Vancouver Island North) | Falk |
| Fantino | Findlay (Delta—Richmond East) |
| Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk) | Fletcher |
| Galipeau | Gallant |
| Glover | Goguen |
| Goldring | Goodyear |
| Gourde | Grewal |
| Harper | Harris (Cariboo—Prince George) |
| Hawn | Hayes |
| Hiebert | Hillyer |
| Hoback | Holder |
| James | Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission) |
| Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's) | Kenney (Calgary Southeast) |
| Kent | Kerr |
| Komarnicki | Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings) |
| Lake | Lauzon |
| Lebel | Leaf |
| Leitch | Lemieux |
| Leung | Lizon |
| Lobb | Lukiwski |
| Lunney | MacKay (Central Nova) |
| MacKenzie | Maguire |
| Mayes | McColeman |
| McLeod | Menegakis |
| Miller | Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam) |
| Moore (Fundy Royal) | Norlock |
| O'Connor | Oliver |
| O'Neill Gordon | Opitz |
| O'Toole | Paradis |
| Payne | Poillievre |
| Preston | Raitt |
| Rajotte | Reid |
| Rempel | Richards |
| Rickford | Ritz |
| Saxton | Schellenberger |

Private Members' Business

Seeback
Shipley
Smith
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Toet
Trottier
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilks
Wong
Zimmer— 145

Shea
Shory
Sopuck
Stanton
Strahl
Tilson
Trost
Truppe
Valcourt
Van Loan
Wallace
Watson
Williamson
Young (Oakville)

Marston
Mathysen
McCallum
Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mourani
Murray
Nash
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Péclet
Pilon
Quach
Rankin
Ravignat
Regan
Saganash
Scott
Sgro
sor)
Sitsabaiesan
Stewart
Toone
Trost
Turmel
Williamson— 135

Martin
May
McGuinty
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nicholls
Pacetti
Patry
Perreault
Plamondon
Rafferty
Rathgeber
Raynault
Rousseau
Scarpaleggia
Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
St-Denis
Sullivan
Tremblay
Trudeau
Valeriot

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 1 defeated. I therefore declare Motions Nos. 2-4 and 6-8 defeated.

[Translation]

The next question is on Motion No. 5.

● (1820)

[English]

(The House divided on Motion No. 5, which was negated on the following division:)

(Division No. 69)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Andrews
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bellavance
Benskin
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Brahmi
Byrne
Casey
Charlton
Chisholm
Choquette
Christopherson
Comartin
Crowder
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)
Del Mastro
Dionne Labelle
Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseault
Eyking
Freeland
Fry
Garrison
Giguère
Goldring
Groguhé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Jacob
Julian
Kellway
Lapointe
Latendresse
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leslie
MacAulay

Anders
Angus
Aubin
Bélangier
Bennett
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brosseau
Caron
Cash
Chicoine
Chong
Chow
Cleary
Côté
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dion
Doré Lefebvre
Dubourg
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Fortin
Freeman
Gameau
Genest
Godin
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hsu
Hyer
Jones
Karygiannis
Lamoureux
Larose
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu
Mai

Ablonczy
Adler
Albas
Alexander
Allison
Ambrose
Armstrong
Aspin
Benoit
Bernier
Blaney
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Cannan
Carrie
Clarke
Crockatt
Davidson
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Fantino
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Galipeau
Glover
Goodyear
Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hillyer
Holder
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Leaf
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Maguire
McColeman
Menegakis
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Norlock
Oliver
Opitz
Paradis
Poilievre

NAYS

Members

Adams
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anderson
Ashfield
Bateman
Bergen
Bezan
Block
Braid
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Carmichael
Chisu
Clement
Daniel
Dechert
Dreeschen
Falk
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Fletcher
Gallant
Goguen
Gourde
Harper
Hawn
Hiebert
Hoback
James
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
Mayes
McLeod
Miller
O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Payne
Preston

Private Members' Business

Raitt
Rempel
Rickford
Saxton
Seeback
Shipley
Smith
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Toet
Truppe
Valcourt
Van Loan
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilks
Young (Oakville)

Reid
Richards
Ritz
Schellenberger
Shea
Shory
Sopuck
Stanton
Strahl
Tilson
Trottier
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Wallace
Watson
Wong
Zimmer— 138

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare Motion No. 5 defeated.

The hon. member for Edmonton—St. Albert is rising on a point of order.

Mr. Brent Rathgeber (Edmonton—St. Albert, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, as Motions Nos. 1 to 8 have all failed, the bill in its current form bears no resemblance to the original Bill C-461 and represents neither public service disclosure nor transparency as the now misnomer title would suggest. Accordingly, the sponsor of the bill does not move concurrence.

SPONSOR'S REFUSAL TO MOVE CONCURRENCE—SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker: The House now seems faced with what seems to be an unprecedented situation. Since the two hours of debate prescribed for report stage and third reading have concluded and the report stage motions have been disposed of, all questions necessary to dispose of the bill should now be put immediately to the House, pursuant to Standing Order 98(4).

However, the sponsor of the bill, the hon. member for Edmonton—St. Albert, has indicated that he does not wish to move the motion to concur in the bill as amended at report stage. Members will recall that pursuant to Standing Order 94, the Speaker may make all arrangements necessary to ensure the orderly conduct of private members' business.

Accordingly, I rule that the order for concurrence at report stage of Bill C-461, An Act to amend the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act (disclosure of information), be discharged and the bill be dropped from the order paper.

(Order discharged and bill withdrawn)

* * *

● (1825)

AN ACT TO AMEND THE FEDERAL SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT ACT (DUTY TO EXAMINE)

The House resumed from February 14 consideration of the motion that Bill C-481, An Act to amend the Federal Sustainable Development Act (duty to examine), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-481 under private members' business.

● (1830)

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

(Division No. 70)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Aubin
Bélangier
Bennett
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brousseau
Caron
Cash
Chicoine
Choquette
Christopherson
Comartin
Crowder
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dion
Doré Lefebvre
Dubourg
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Fortin
Freeman
Gameau
Genest
Godin
Groguhé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Jacob
Julian
Kellway
Lapointe
Latendresse
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leslie
MacAulay
Marston
Mathysen
McCallum
Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mourani
Murray
Nash
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Pécelet
Pilon
Quach
Rankin
Raynault
Rousseau
Scarpaleggia
Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Sitsabaiesan
St-Denis
Sullivan
Tremblay
Turmel

Andrews
Atamanenko
Ayala
Bellavance
Benskin
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Brahmi
Byrne
Casey
Charlton
Chisholm
Chow
Cleary
Côté
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dionne Labelle
Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseault
Eyking
Freeland
Fry
Garrison
Giguère
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hsu
Hyer
Jones
Karygiannis
Lamoureux
Larose
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Énard)
Liu
Mai
Martin
May
McGuinty
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nicholls
Pacetti
Patry
Perreault
Plamondon
Rafferty
Ravignat
Regan
Saganash
Scott
Sgro
Stewart
Toone
Trudeau
Valeriote— 128

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy
Adler
Adams
Aglukkaq

Private Members' Business

| | |
|---|------------------------------------|
| Albas | Albrecht |
| Alexander | Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac) |
| Allison | Ambler |
| Ambrose | Anders |
| Anderson | Armstrong |
| Ashfield | Aspin |
| Bateman | Benoit |
| Bergen | Bernier |
| Bezan | Blaney |
| Block | Boughen |
| Braid | Breitkreuz |
| Brown (Newmarket—Aurora) | Brown (Barrie) |
| Bruinooge | Butt |
| Calandra | Cannan |
| Carmichael | Carrie |
| Chisu | Chong |
| Clarke | Clement |
| Crockatt | Daniel |
| Davidson | Dechert |
| Del Mastro | Devolin |
| Dreeshen | Duncan (Vancouver Island North) |
| Falk | Fantino |
| Findlay (Delta—Richmond East) | Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk) |
| Fletcher | Galipeau |
| Gallant | Glover |
| Goguen | Goldring |
| Goodyear | Gourde |
| Grewal | Harper |
| Harris (Cariboo—Prince George) | Hawn |
| Hayes | Hiebert |
| Hillyer | Hoback |
| Holder | James |
| Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission) | Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's) |
| Kenney (Calgary Southeast) | Kent |
| Kerr | Komarnicki |
| Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings) | Lake |
| Lauzon | Lebel |
| Leaf | Leitch |
| Lemieux | Leung |
| Lizon | Lobb |
| Lukiwski | Lunney |
| MacKay (Central Nova) | MacKenzie |
| Maguire | Mayes |
| McColeman | McLeod |
| Menegakis | Miller |
| Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam) | |
| Moore (Fundy Royal) | |
| Norlock | O'Connor |
| Oliver | O'Neill Gordon |
| Opitz | O'Toole |
| Paradis | Payne |
| Poilievre | Preston |
| Raitt | Rajotte |
| Rathgeber | Reid |
| Rempel | Richards |
| Rickford | Ritz |
| Saxton | Schellenberger |
| Seeback | Shea |
| Shipley | Shory |
| Smith | Sopuck |
| Sorenson | Stanton |
| Storseth | Strahl |
| Sweet | Tilson |
| Toet | Trost |
| Trottier | Truppe |
| Uppal | Valcourt |
| Van Kesteren | Van Loan |
| Vellacott | Wallace |
| Warkentin | Watson |
| Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country) | |
| Weston (Saint John) | |
| Wilks | Williamson |
| Wong | Woodworth |
| Young (Oakville) | Zimmer — 148 |

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.**SUPPORT FOR VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS ACT**

The House resumed from February 25 consideration of the motion that Bill C-504, An Act to amend the Canada Labour Code (volunteer firefighters), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

The Speaker: The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the motion at second reading stage of Bill C-504.

● (1840)

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

(Division No. 71)

YEAS

Members

| | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Allen (Welland) | Angus |
| Atamanenko | Aubin |
| Ayala | Bellavance |
| Benskin | Bevington |
| Blanchette | Blanchette-Lamothe |
| Boivin | Borg |
| Boutin-Sweet | Brahmi |
| Brousseau | Caron |
| Cash | Charlton |
| Chicoine | Chisholm |
| Choquette | Chow |
| Christopherson | Cleary |
| Comartin | Côté |
| Crowder | Cullen |
| Davies (Vancouver Kingsway) | Davies (Vancouver East) |
| Day | Dionne Labelle |
| Doré Lefebvre | Dubé |
| Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona) | Dusseault |
| Fortin | Freeman |
| Garrison | Genest |
| Giguère | Godin |
| Gravelle | Groguhé |
| Harris (Scarborough Southwest) | Harris (St. John's East) |
| Hughes | Hyer |
| Jacob | Julian |
| Kellway | Lapointe |
| Larose | Latendresse |
| Laverdière | LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard) |
| Leslie | Liu |
| Mai | Marston |
| Martin | Mathysen |
| May | Michaud |
| Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue) | Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord) |
| Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine) | Morin (Laurentides—Labelle) |
| Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot) | Mourani |
| Mulcair | Nantel |
| Nash | Nicholls |
| Nunez-Melo | Papillon |
| Patry | Péclet |
| Perreault | Pilon |
| Plamondon | Quach |
| Rafferty | Rankin |
| Rathgeber | Ravignat |
| Raynault | Rousseau |
| Saganash | Scott |
| Sellah | Sitsabaiesan |
| Stewart | Sullivan |
| Toone | Tremblay |
| Turmel — 97 | |

NAYS

Members

| | |
|-----------|---------------------------|
| Ablonczy | Adams |
| Adler | Aglukkaq |
| Albas | Albrecht |
| Alexander | Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac) |
| Allison | Ambler |
| Ambrose | Anders |

Anderson
Armstrong
Aspin
Bélanger
Benoit
Bernier
Blaney
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calandra
Carmichael
Casey
Chong
Clement
Cuzner
Davidson
Del Mastro
Dion
Dubourg
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Eyking
Fantino
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Freeland
Galipeau
Garneau
Goguen
Goodyear
Grewal
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hillyer
Holder
James
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Lauzon
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKay (Central Nova)
Maguire
McCallum
McGuinty
Menegakis
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)
Moore (Fundy Royal)
Murray
O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Paradis
Poilievre
Raitt
Regan
Rempel
Ritz
Scarpaleggia
Seeback
Shea
Shory
Sor
Smith
Sorenson
St-Denis
Strahl
Tilson
Trost
Trudeau
Uppal
Valeriote
Van Loan
Wallace
Watson
Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Williamson

Andrews
Ashfield
Bateman
Bennett
Bergen
Bezan
Block
Braid
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Byrne
Cannan
Carrie
Chisu
Clarke
Crockatt
Daniel
Dechert
Devolin
Dreesen
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Easter
Falk
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Fletcher
Fry
Gallant
Glover
Goldring
Gourde
Harper
Hawn
Hiebert
Hoback
Hsu
Jones
Karygiannis
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lamoureux
Lebel
Leef
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacAulay
MacKenzie
Mayes
McColeman
McLeod
Miller
Norlock
Oliver
Opitz
Pacetti
Payne
Preston
Rajotte
Reid
Rickford
Saxton
Schellenberger
Sgro
Shipley
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor)
Sopuck
Stanton
Storseth
Sweet
Toet
Trottier
Truppe
Valcourt
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wilks
Wong

Private Members' Business

Woodworth
Zimmer — 177

Young (Oakville)

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

It being 6:40 p.m. the House will now proceed to the consideration of private members' business as listed on today's order paper.

* * *

[*Translation*]

PROTECTING TAXPAYERS AND REVOKING PENSIONS OF CONVICTED POLITICIANS ACT

The House resumed from December 10, 2013, consideration of the motion that Bill C-518, An Act to amend the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act (withdrawal allowance), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP): Mr. Speaker, thank you for giving us the quiet we need in the House to make a few comments about this bill, since it is a private member's bill and therefore no period for questions and answers is provided. It is too bad, because I would have liked to ask some questions. I will ask some during my speech and hope that they will be heard. Perhaps I will get some answers later.

This bill is rather odd. As we are entering a second hour of discussion on this bill, allow me to quickly put it into context again and provide another overview of the bill introduced by our colleague from New Brunswick Southwest, for those who are following us on CPAC or on other media.

Let us first look at the title: Bill C-518, An Act to amend the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act (withdrawal allowance). If I were a regular citizen seeing this at home, I would immediately think, “Finally, they are going to get rid of pensions for overpaid MPs”. However, that is not at all what this bill is about. That is why I want to set the record straight.

Bill C-518 revokes or would revoke the privilege of a retirement pension or compensation allowance for former members of the Senate or House of Commons who are convicted of an offence under an act of Parliament. The parliamentarian must have been indicted for an offence with a maximum punishment of imprisonment for not less than two years. The offence must have been committed, in whole or in part, while the person was an MP or senator.

That is more or less the idea behind this bill, which, I must say, comes at a curious time. Obviously, I can tell you right away that there is little chance that we will not vote in favour of this bill, because otherwise we would practically be saying that we are against virtue. However, while I would not say that drafting a bill that asks members of the House to obey the law is worthless, it does raise quite a few questions.

Among other things, it is amusing to see a bill come from the Conservatives that in some way deals with issues of ethics and honesty. In fact, the bill involves revoking pensions that are to be paid to elected officials should there be a serious omission or should they commit a serious crime that breaches a federal law.

Private Members' Business

Allow me to say that if the substantive principles of this bill make sense, the approach is somewhat suspicious, just like the timing of the bill's introduction. We might also wonder why this bill is so relevant now. From what I understand with my meagre experience of a few years as a parliamentarian, MPs usually table a private member's bill to solve a problem, fix a legislative loophole or clarify a particular local issue. The question here is: what situation is this bill trying to fix?

I will take the opposite approach. It seems entirely clear to me that the vast majority of MPs in the House, regardless of their political affiliation, are here for good reasons, despite their different perspectives on various bills and the direction our society should take. The vast majority of MPs serve quite honestly, to the best of their abilities and with an ultimate goal, which is to serve their constituents to the best of their knowledge and to the best of their convictions. Therefore, what is the purpose of this bill?

● (1845)

I get the feeling that this exercise is not about diversion or camouflage, but rather about image, in order to send the message that some Conservative members—and certainly the member for New Brunswick Southwest—want to address the scandals in the House of Commons, the government and the Senate.

I cannot help but recognize that most of the scandals we have been talking about for many weeks now do not involve my party. Still, I find the current juxtaposition of this bill rather strange.

I read the entire bill; it is only two pages long. I am by no means suggesting that a two-page bill is irrelevant. That is not what I am suggesting. However, it seems to me that someone who really cared about this issue would want to take the time to look much deeper.

For instance, Nova Scotia has a very similar bill. However, it is much more comprehensive than Bill C-518, which is being proposed today. I have to wonder if the sponsor really wants to solve a problem that he considers important, which it may very well be, as the misappropriation of funds has become increasingly common in recent weeks. I will not dwell on these cases now, but perhaps I will give a couple of examples before the end of my speech.

If one really cared about this matter, it would only make sense to consult the case law, to consult similar legislation that exists in other countries and to consult the provinces. I just used the word “consult” three times, and I suspect I just created something. I am not quite sure what to call it; it is not quite an oxymoron. Let us just say that the word “consult” and the word “Conservative” do not flow together naturally for me.

I will give a very specific example. I would like to remind members that I will be voting in favour of this bill because we cannot be against virtue. If an MP or Senator has committed the acts warranting the penalties set out in Bill C-518—the loss of retiring allowances and other compensation—why is it that in Nova Scotia, for example, a minimum five-year sentence is required as compared to two years in the case of this bill?

Once again, it is probably to give the impression that this government is tough on crime and that it is going to take a hard line. I would like everyone to draw their own conclusions about that.

What seems to be missing in this bill, and leaves me quite perplexed, is that this income is not always the income of just that one person. I will explain. We are revoking the retirement income of an MP or senator, without including in the bill possible exceptions for the people who depend on this income.

For example, if the parliamentarian's child support payments are based directly on his or her income, a judge could review the support payments because the MP's or the senator's income has changed.

This means that this tough-on-crime bill for someone who commits fraud significantly affects more than just the person who committed the fraud. I have a serious problem with that.

The second problem I have with this bill is that it reminds me of something we have seen in many bills.

● (1850)

This bill establishes penalties for the person who commits the crime. We have seen this hundreds of times in other Conservative bills. Perhaps I am exaggerating a bit and getting carried away. However, this bill does nothing to prevent these situations.

Although we cannot be against virtue and we will be supporting this bill, it seems to me that it is designed solely to make a good impression and is an inappropriate solution.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I will pick up on the member's ending remarks concerning public relations.

One of the things I have found to be very topical, whether it is provincial politics or federal politics, is the issue of pensions.

I have had the opportunity to sit on different types of committees over the years to deal with the matter of pensions, on issues such as who should be entitled to a pension, what type of pension it might be, and so forth. In fact, as an MLA, I was involved in discussions as to how we could replace the pension program that we had in 1988. I can say that people are very much concerned about the pensions that politicians receive. We want aspiring politicians, and we recognize that they often sacrifice a great deal in order to have the privilege and opportunity to represent someone. However, there are always questions.

I have had the opportunity to have many discussions with political candidates in the past. One of the questions they often have is with respect to benefits, annual pay, and so forth. These are issues that one would expect to come up for anyone seeking elected office.

On the other hand, from the constituents' perspective, we find there is a certain caring attitude, of wanting to see fairness within the system.

Private Members' Business

I have seen a lot of change in the ways in which pensions have come into being. As I pointed out, back in 1988 when I was first elected, we had a pension program. It was something in the nature that one had to be successful in three consecutive elections, or to have been elected, I think it was for eight years, though I could be a bit out on that. However, then one would be able to receive a pension virtually immediately.

Some members of the public felt that was not an appropriate type of program for elected officials at the provincial level. There was a great deal of debate, and we ultimately formed a committee. That committee was made up of a group of interesting stakeholders. One of them, I believe, was Mr. Northcott, who is with Winnipeg Harvest. There was representation from management and union. What happened ultimately is that we lost the pension program in favour of matching RRSP contributions.

In the late 1990s, 2001, and 2002, there was a change. MLAs would make contributions, the government would match those contributions, and that would go into an RRSP.

When Gary Doer became the premier of Manitoba, he recognized there was a need to go back to government pensions, as opposed to matching RRSPs. That is ultimately what ended up happening.

Again, I have had the opportunity to listen in to some areas, and in other areas to get engaged, in terms of what sort of pension programming and benefits that MLAs should be entitled to.

One of the things I found to be important throughout the whole process was the need to provide assurances to the public that there is a proper way to deal with the benefits that MLAs receive. That is why I was quite pleased that the provincial Liberal Party was involved in terms of how we come up with the pay, benefits, and pension-related issues. Ultimately, pensions were then reformed in the province of Manitoba.

• (1855)

I say that because I have had the opportunity, through the leadership of the leader of the Liberal Party, to become engaged with the procedures and House affairs committee. There has been a lot of discussion there about benefits of members of Parliament, the Board of Internal Economy, and to a certain degree there are issues relating to pay.

One of the suggestions, from the perspective of the Liberal Party of Canada, is that we need to look at ways we can have more independence in terms of the setting of pensions and the salaries of members of Parliament. That was incorporated in our report. I must say it was a minority report; it did not receive the support from all parties. However, if we look at what our constituents would want, it is in the best interest of the House to see that independence in the setting of salaries for politicians. I suspect it will only be a question of time before that will be the case in Ottawa.

With Bill C-518, I understand what the member is proposing: Should an individual be denied a pension if they have been held criminally responsible? If we were to try to get a better understanding of the details of what the member is suggesting, I would be most interested in hearing that and having that dialogue.

However, my primary concern is dealing with the bigger issue of pensions. That is the reason I started my comments by talking about the idea of independence and how pensions are best set. From a personal perspective, I do not know if I would qualify for a member of Parliament pension. I believe it is six years, but I am not a hundred per cent sure of that.

With regard to members of Parliament or members of legislative assemblies throughout out country, I suspect that the primary reason they become engaged in politics is not necessarily to receive a pension. I like to believe that individuals who take an interest in politics, first and foremost get involved because they want to serve. I think that is of critical importance.

Individuals approach me, especially nowadays, and at least every other week I talk to someone who could be interested in becoming engaged in politics. Being able to share with them about the compensation and so forth is important. There is no doubt about that. However, their real interest is in being able to serve the community in which they live, whether it is a smaller neighbourhood or the broader country. That is admirable.

The bottom line is that we have to respect that and to recognize there is a need for some form of compensation. As to what kind of compensation and to what degree, I would like to see that brought into the realm of independence in terms of how that compensation would be determined.

With regard to the bill specifically, I look forward to hearing more debate.

• (1900)

[*Translation*]

Mr. François Pilon (Laval—Les Îles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased today to be speaking to Bill C-518, An Act to amend the Members of Parliament Retiring Allowances Act.

The bill would revoke the privilege of a retirement pension or compensation allowance for former members of the Senate or House of Commons who are convicted of an offence under an act of Parliament that is punishable by a minimum of two years in prison. These types of sentences of two years or more mostly involve federal offences covered by the Criminal Code.

Once the bill is passed, MPs or senators who have been found guilty of such an offence would be reimbursed their pension contributions plus interest, which is consistent with other applicable legislation.

The NDP supports this bill because we believe that any bill that strengthens parliamentary ethics is a step in the right direction. However, it is clear that this bill is really just a Conservative charade to make us believe that they are not responsible for the Senate scandal and that they champion ethics.

In reality, the Prime Minister—a man who appointed people like Patrick Brazeau, Mike Duffy and Pamela Wallin to taxpayer-funded positions—is using this bill to try to make us believe that he has at least a vestige of ethics. Canadians know better and they will not forget this government's schemes.

Private Members' Business

Liberal Party senators, those who are part of the non-Liberal caucus or rather independent Liberal senators with no caucus or something of that sort, should not get too excited yet. Canadians have not forgotten that they had no issues with Mac Harb even after he was caught with his hand in the cookie jar, nor have they forgotten that the Liberals paid their deficit by drawing on workers' employment insurance contributions. Above all, nobody, particularly nobody in Quebec, has forgotten the sponsorship scandal. Quebeckers are fed up, and in case anyone is wondering, it is not because the Montreal Canadiens are winning the Stanley Cup. It is because Quebeckers believe in their motto "Je me souviens" or "I remember".

In short, although the bill is a step in the right direction, it is just a front and does not address the serious ethical problems caused by both the Conservative and Liberal parties. No legislation can do that. The problem is these parties' culture of entitlement. They think that they deserve to be in power no matter what they do and that they eventually will be again one day. They think they are entitled to their entitlements. That is an unhealthy way of thinking. The NDP is now giving Canadians a healthy option that works for them. The NDP knows that it is a privilege to represent Canadians, not a given right. The NDP works for Canadians, not for the lobbies.

I am also proud to mention that the bill is basically copied from a bill introduced by the NDP government of Nova Scotia that received royal assent on May 10, 2013.

I am pleased that the members opposite are finally using one of our ideas to draft ethics-related legislation. Perhaps they are starting to see the light, unless they are merely acting like a co-worker who steals other people's lunches and then puts a note on the fridge the next day warning people to stop stealing others' lunches. Given the government's history, I tend to think the latter is true.

Let us now come back to the subject at hand. Clearly, the purpose of the bill is to show that the Conservative Party is angry about the ethical lapses of its senators, who were all personally appointed by the Prime Minister.

● (1905)

The same is true for the Liberals, who magically made their senators disappear overnight and who will surely make them reappear when they need them.

In fact, the party of the Mac Harbs and Raymond Lavignes still plays political games, assuming that Canadians are naive, when they are not. Canadians see through their games and, with each passing day, more and more Canadians come to trust the NDP. The only solution to the ethical problems of parliamentarians is to elect an NDP government and to abolish the Senate.

Even the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, formerly run by the member for New Brunswick Southwest, believes that the lack of ethics in the House comes from the blue and the red parties. Let me quote what Director Gregory Thomas said:

Canadians have just witnessed the spectacle of convicted fraudster, former Liberal Senator and MP Raymond Lavigne, collecting his \$67,000 annual pension while sitting in jail for filing false Senate expense claims.

We now have a former Liberal MP and Senator and a former Conservative Senator each facing criminal charges relating to their official duties, with more Senators under criminal investigation.

Clearly, Senators and MPs need tougher anti-corruption penalties to combat the temptations politicians face.

This quote, which could not be clearer, perfectly summarizes the constant and systemic ethical breaches of successive Liberal and Conservative governments for the past 20 years, from the sponsorship scandal to the current Senate scandal.

This bill is a step in the right direction. That is why we in the NDP will support the bill at second reading. However, we cannot legislate the culture or the ethics of a party. That is the problem with this government and the third party.

That is why we must send a message that Canadians need a government that respects them and that will work in their best interests rather than its own interests. In 2015, that is the government Canadians will have by voting for the NDP.

● (1910)

[English]

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

Mr. John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, CPC): Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of points I would like to make in concluding this second hour of debate.

I appreciate some of the comments I heard from the other side, I believe referring to the bill as virtuous, which I suppose is good news, but at the same time questioning some of the motivations behind it. I am not going to respond to those. I am just happy to have support for this bill.

There are some amendments to this bill that I believe are necessary, which I referenced in the first hour of debate. As one hon. member noted, in the original draft of the bill I did suggest in drafting it that the penalties be invoked for any crime where the maximum penalty is two or more years. Upon reflection and consultation, as I stated some weeks ago, I felt that the threshold should be increased to five-year indictable crimes, elevating it to charges that would include, for example, breach of trust, theft, serious charges, because the consequences are serious for members of Parliament.

As well, this bill as drafted is very much in line with the law that exists currently in Nova Scotia. My bill was tabled on June 3, 2013, and would apply to any convictions after that date if it is passed here and in the other place, and ultimately receives royal assent. However, should it be successful and move on to committee, here is really the test that committee members should consider when weighing the merits of this bill. It is what I call the Lavigne test case. Senator Lavigne was convicted of fraud and breach of trust, yet he resigned from his position as a senator before he could be ejected, thereby keeping his parliamentary pension.

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He was convicted of these crimes, which, as I said, have a threshold. The maximum is five or more years. However, he was only sentenced to six months. That really is the type of scoundrel we are trying to capture with this legislation: individuals who are convicted of serious crimes. It should not matter the amount of time spent in prison, but rather the crimes that people are convicted of in a court of law. That is the request I put to the committee for consideration as they look at possible amendments to this bill, beyond the ones I am suggesting. How would it work in practice with respect to an individual who has already gone through it? How do we ensure, going forward, that we do not see that kind of abuse again? I remember when Senator Lavigne was able to resign and keep his pension.

On that note, I will highlight what the law currently states. Currently, on the books for both the House of Commons and the other place, the Senate, if a member is convicted of a serious crime, he or she is to be evicted, and when that happens, that member loses his or her pension. The loophole, the out, is that he or she can resign before being ejected and in doing so can hold onto his or her pension. I believe we should close that loophole. If a member of either House is found to be guilty, their pension should be revoked automatically and that loophole should not exist.

I look forward to the committee's review and recommendations if we are successful going forward, as well as further consultation on this bill.

• (1915)

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): I declare the motion carried. Accordingly, the bill stands referred to the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

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

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): Pursuant to an order made on Monday, February, 24, 2014, the House will now resolve itself into committee of the whole to consider Motion No. 8 under government business. I do now leave the chair for the House to go into committee of the whole.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

UKRAINE

(House in committee of the whole on Government Business No. 8, Mr. Barry Devolin in the chair)

Hon. Chris Alexander (for the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons) moved:

That this Committee take note of the evolving situation in Ukraine.

The Deputy Chair: Order. Before we begin this evening's debate, I would like to remind hon. members of how the proceedings will unfold.

Each member speaking will be allotted 10 minutes for debate, followed by 10 minutes for questions and comments. Members may divide their time with another member.

The debate will end after four hours or when no member rises to speak. Pursuant to an order adopted Monday, February 24, 2014, the Chair will receive no quorum calls, dilatory motions or requests for unanimous consent.

We will now begin tonight's take note debate accordingly.

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Chair, many of us in the House and across Canada have been thinking about Ukraine in recent days and weeks as violence, unfortunately, has swept across the Maidan, Kiev's Independence Square, and across other parts of the country, taking the lives of too many innocent people.

I would like to start by recapping the role the Canadian government has tried to play in this crisis from the outset. It is one of leadership and based on a principled stand in favour of the aspirations of the Ukrainian people, including freedom for the Ukrainian people; a return to democracy; obviously full protection of human rights, which were being trampled all too often in recent days and weeks; and further commitment to develop the rule of law in that country, which is still emerging from the Soviet legacy that distorted its institutions so badly, and which so richly deserves a brighter future based on a market economy, on integration with Europe, and in line with the aspirations of the people.

This crisis has been some time in coming. Back in November there was very forceful diplomacy under way to bring about an historic agreement between Ukraine and the European Union. It was an association agreement. It seemed to have wide, popular support in Ukraine. It certainly had been devised based on long and deep consultations throughout the member states of the European Union.

Then suddenly on November 21, that prospect was gone. There were immediate protests and then through the month of December. Violence started in January. Canada was alongside the Ukrainian people every step of the way, with many in the House, and certainly our leadership on the government side, making public statements regularly. I do not know how many statements were made by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, but it was certainly a large number, urging that the association agreement be embraced by the government. When that did not happen, we urged restraint and that no further steps be taken back from what we and the Ukrainians take to be their economic destiny. Then when the violence began, we focused on using our voice and joining it with those of like-minded partners and allies around the world to make sure that the violence stopped.

The violence did not stop. By late January, we found ourselves in the position of having to take an unprecedented step regarding Ukraine, putting in place a travel ban on those members of the Yanukovich regime who had been responsible at that time for limited but very serious violence. The deaths then numbered around a dozen.

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Then we came to the month of February and the violence got worse. Dozens of people, close to 100, well over 80, were confirmed to have been killed. This threat was during the spectacle of the Sochi Olympics, which had certain Soviet aspects and certainly a salute to Soviet history, a somewhat airbrushed Soviet history, in the opening ceremonies. The Sochi Olympics held the splendour, the grandeur, the triumph of our athletes, whom we are all very proud of.

Only a few hundred miles away, this tragedy was unfolding in the streets of Kiev. We were caught in that paradox, obviously deeply concerned by the fact that those courageous protestors who had chosen to put their lives on the line in the centre of Kiev might face brute force from their own government on a very large scale, including from the army.

Last week we took the difficult but necessary decision to announce that sanctions would be imposed on those members of the regime who were perpetrating the violence, bringing this unnecessary suffering onto the Ukrainian people, literally holding their dreams and aspirations hostage.

● (1920)

However, as members know, events have moved extremely quickly. The day, or two days after, those sanctions were announced suddenly the opposition was in control of Kiev; suddenly the Verkhovna Rada had taken a decision to impeach the president; suddenly the president was on the run. Suddenly there was a new acting president, an acting prime minister, and now there is a list of new ministers that is to be confirmed by democratic process by the democratically elected representatives of Ukraine. As well, a number of other demands of the opposition were met in fairly short order.

Just to be clear, the sanctions we announced remain a tool that is available to Canada. The legislation that we need to undertake sanctions is there. The decisions by the Governor in Council that would be necessary to enact the sanctions are available and could be enacted very soon. However, we have not imposed the sanctions because the Yanukovich regime, thankfully, is no more, and we hope that all of those people responsible for the violence will no longer feature in the regime and we will not have to take these steps to punish the regime in this way.

We are watching the situation closely. We are consulting with our allies, and as members know, Canada will continue to stand on principle in all matters relating to Ukraine. Several of our colleagues are en route tonight, led by the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, who will be welcomed very warmly by the opposition, some of whom are forming a new government, and by the Ukrainian people who heard the voice of Canada standing with them through these weeks of violence and uncertainty.

What is the larger issue that is facing us in Ukraine? This is one of the great countries of Europe, with 44 million people, the second-largest country in Europe to emerge from the former Soviet Union. Canada was the first country to recognize its independence in 1991. Our relationship is that close. Canada, not Poland, was the first country, and I was there and can prove it. The relationship between our countries is so deep that we have followed Ukraine's development every step of the way. We have sent observers to elections. We have trained public servants. We have been involved in

Ukraine's form of justice institutions. However, what has really been happening over those 23-odd years since 1991?

● (1925)

[*Translation*]

It is like a pendulum swinging in the lives of Ukrainians. There was a period of great enthusiasm and great democratic excitement in the early 1990s, followed by a period, not dictatorial in its purest sense, but of dictatorial behaviour, under a regime that was increasingly autocratic. It relied on the influence of oligarchs, shady individuals, often in Russia and Ukraine, with significant means. They were not accountable to the people and had no respect for the rule of law, but they were running the country.

Then, in 2004, the Orange Revolution set this autocratic system aside for a while, before president Yanukovich took power and began the process all over again. He strengthened his power and settled into an increasingly repressive system.

[*English*]

The real choice for Ukraine is this: Does it want to be Poland? Can it be? Will it be given the opportunity to be a Poland, a country moving forward in Europe, a country benefiting from free enterprise, from investment from around the world, and from the talent of its citizens? Or does it want to be Belarus, a country that is very much under the influence of another part of Europe, a country whose standard of living has declined, not risen, and a country whose opportunities are few and the future not bright because of the autocracy that continues to prevail there?

We are very clear about what side we are on. The Ukrainian people have been clear this weekend about which side they are on. I hope that all members of the House in tonight's debate will do everything in their power to show that Canada is united in supporting freedom and progress for the Ukrainian people.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague for his very interesting speech. However, I must admit that I was a bit surprised to hear him say that Canada has not imposed sanctions because the Yanukovich regime is no more.

The regime is no more, but one of the sanctions we suggested and pushed very hard for was to freeze his assets. They have not been frozen. President Yanukovich and his regime—let us call it what it is—still have access to these assets. The majority of these assets most likely belong to the people of Ukraine and they should one day be returned to these people so that they can rebuild their country. These leaders could also use these assets to flee the country.

Why have we not frozen their assets?

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● (1930)

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Chair, we are obviously still very concerned about the role of Yanukovich, his allies, his inner circle, about his fate, his future and what is next for him. However, we must recognize that he is no longer president. He was removed by his own parliament. He is no longer in power and is now facing very serious charges from Ukraine itself and from a new Ukrainian regime. It is up to that regime to freeze his assets and to ensure that he is held accountable for his actions.

Of course, Canada is prepared to do everything it can. We will continue to consult our allies and partners about sanctions, but Yanukovich's assets are primarily in Ukraine. Ukraine has to ensure that Yanukovich is held accountable.

[*English*]

Hon. Jim Karygiannis (Scarborough—Agincourt, Lib.): Mr. Chair, there is a lot of work we have been doing in Ukraine. Every party has been very supportive of the work we have been doing.

The political bully, Yanukovich, has to be tamed down. There are other political bullies in this world, such as in Sri Lanka.

I do not mean to take away from the debate tonight, the interest that is there, and the work we still have to do. I know that the government is sending its members over to Ukraine. It is a real shame that the other parties were not invited to go along.

However, my question to the minister is about another part of the world. My question is about Venezuela. In Venezuela, something is happening that is just as bad as what is happening in Ukraine.

Would we take the appropriate steps, as we did and as we pushed for in Ukraine? The Canadian Ukrainians and Ukrainians around the world are grateful. Would we do the same thing in Venezuela? Will we bar officials of the Maduro regime from coming to Canada, and will the minister try to impose sanctions as well as travel bans on the people who are doing this in Caracas, Venezuela, right now?

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Chair, with regard to Venezuela, we remain concerned by the situation. We called for the violence to end. We want the government there also to hold itself to account and to be held to account so there is no further loss of life. We have called for a renewal of dialogue between the government and the opposition.

However, tonight's debate is about Ukraine. We have to remind ourselves that, despite the events that took place over the weekend, most of them heartening, most of them positive from Canada's perspective and that of the Ukrainians, the hard work of building a new, more credible regime, a government more credible in the eyes of the Ukrainian people, is only just beginning. There are challenges. All of us who have worked in eastern Europe and transitional countries know it is extremely difficult, especially in the wake of a regime that was so corrupt and so brutal with its own people.

One challenge is simply delivering honest government, delivering service to people at every level that does not involve a bribe. Also there is the challenge of avoiding the further loss of economic momentum. There has been loss of economic momentum as the protests and chaos grew in Kiev. Thirdly, there is also the whole issue of the rule of law and justice institutions, which are issues in every post-Soviet state but especially in countries like Ukraine where

unaccountable oligarchs, true autocrats, and other forms of abuse have been all too present.

● (1935)

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Chair, I would like to know from my colleague, as part of the democratic evolution to bring about stability, whether it necessarily involves linguistic resolve, linguistic stability, and linguistic inclusiveness between the Russian-speaking Ukrainians and Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians? I wonder if he would comment on that and say to the people listening whether that is going to be included in the overall Canadian approach of trying to bring about stability and democratic resolve?

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Chair, that is an interesting question for us as a bilingual country in a bilingual chamber.

I was corrected on this issue earlier today by the ambassador of Ukraine. I had thought that Ukraine had become an officially bilingual country. That is actually not the case. It continues to have, as it did under the Yanukovich regime and before the Yanukovich regime, only one official language. That is Ukrainian.

Under Yanukovich, in certain regions, more service was delivered in Russian. There were minority language rights to a certain extent at the regional level. Apparently the new post-Yanukovich parliament has disavowed that law. That is not going to stop. As the member well knows, a large number of Ukrainians speak Russian as their principal language. It is very important, as we know, that accommodation take place. There are other linguistic minorities in Ukraine, many of whom have not enjoyed the kinds of services they would like to see. This is something that the international community will be watching, but for now, Ukrainian remains the one official language of the country. Of course, it will be a Ukrainian decision to maintain that or alter it down the road. It is something that every democratic people must decide for themselves.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Chair, we have roughly 1.2 million people of Ukrainian heritage from coast to coast. There is very much a caring heart here in Canada for what is happening in Ukraine. It goes beyond just those of Ukrainian heritage; all Canadians want the best for the future of Ukraine. They want the people of Ukraine to get what they want. We have recognized this. We had the take note debate back on December 10. We had an emergency debate on January 27. We have, yet again, another take note debate.

Canada cares about what is happening in Ukraine. I ask the minister to provide assurances from his perspective and that of the Government of Canada that as much as possible, in an apolitical fashion, they recognize there are people all over, from all different political spectrums, who want to participate in supporting Ukraine. Perhaps he could comment on that.

Hon. Chris Alexander: Mr. Chair, yes, of course, we understand on this side of the House how strong this sense is across Canada and in all parties in the House that we, Canada, must do everything in our power to support Ukraine and a return to democracy. That is exactly what we are aiming to do through Minister Baird's trip. He was on the Maidan at a critical time. He is going back to see a changed landscape and a more hopeful one.

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We know that the way forward will involve hard work and hard choices for Ukrainians, choices about leadership and choices about how to implement accountability. We also know that it is going to involve work by all of us, with our friends and partners around the world. There is going to have to be support for Ukraine on some scale. We are already talking about it. There is going to have to be an effort to counter corruption on the grand scale that it was taking place.

There is going to have to be a path into Europe, probably going beyond an association agreement eventually, to a more substantial partnership with Europe. That is what Ukrainians want.

Of course, we all want to see Ukraine's unity, sovereignty, and independence respected. Any country, neighbouring or otherwise, that calls into question those sacred principles will have to face the Ukrainian people and all their friends and allies around the world who insist that this unity, independence, and sovereignty be respected.

• (1940)

The Deputy Chair: Before we resume debate, I want to remind all hon. members that they ought not to be referring to their colleagues, including ministers, by their given names but simply by their offices or constituencies.

Second, I would ask that members refer to the Chair for a signal that it is time to wrap up either their questions or answers. It is more difficult to command the room from this seat than from the Speaker's chair, but I would ask for the co-operation of all hon. members.

Resuming debate, the hon. member for Laurier—Sainte-Marie.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Chair, we are obviously all very concerned about the situation in Ukraine. That is why I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak in the House tonight as part of this take note debate.

I want to point out that we requested an emergency debate on Monday. Although our request was denied, at least we are able to talk about this very important issue this evening.

We were all relieved to see that violence has de-escalated over the past few days. We were also very relieved to learn, just a few hours ago, that a government of national unity is being formed in Ukraine. This is a good sign and a step in the right direction. It is desperately needed. Let us make no mistake. Just because President Yanukovich is gone and there is this new government of national unity does not mean that the situation has been resolved. There is still a lot to be done.

One urgent problem that exists right now is Ukraine's economic situation. This country needs billions of dollars. I think that Canada should work with its IMF partners to ensure that the major emergencies can at least be dealt with.

There are still stability and security issues. The country will not become stable and secure again unless all the actors in Ukrainian society work together, which appears to be happening.

I would like to comment further on the idea of working together. The government announced that a Canadian delegation is going to

Kiev. I think that is good because it is something we asked for. I am glad the government is doing that. However, it is too bad that the delegation includes only Conservative members of Parliament and that opposition MPs were not invited. They are going to Ukraine to deliver a message of national unity, but they cannot even set an example by inviting parliamentarians from both sides of the House to address an issue that people have differing opinions about, even though we agree on the heart of the matter.

There are still many challenges ahead, including the challenge of getting all regions of the country to work together. People from all over seem to be coming together, although the situation in Crimea is something of an unknown. We have been following that situation closely. Also unknown is how neighbouring Russia will react, but we have to hope that things will settle down in the coming hours and days.

May is not far off, and there is an election to organize. A well-run election is critical to progress in Ukraine. Canada must send election observers.

Even that will not be the end of the story. Not everything will have been said and done. After that, the country needs to be rebuilt. At that stage, Canada needs to be more present than ever. Institutions must be strengthened, and that includes law enforcement and public services. Corruption must be battled. Democratic development must take place; that is critical. Economic development must be pursued. Earlier I said that the very difficult economic situation is one of the toughest issues Ukraine is dealing with right now.

• (1945)

I would like to digress again here. At the meeting of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development this afternoon, we heard from several people, including some groups of Ukrainian Canadians. I was astounded to learn that people are still waiting for a call for tenders for a project discussed with CIDA to promote small business in Ukraine.

Small businesses are essential to the economy, but they also help combat corruption because they are less of a target for the large corruption networks. However, people have been waiting for the call for tenders to be issued for over a year. Beyond the more general situation, I am therefore taking the opportunity to encourage the government to ensure that this call for tenders is finally issued.

Going back to Ukraine's major challenges, there is the matter of tax evasion. We heard that people had evaded tax on over \$40 billion. Therefore, the tax system needs to be reformed. Canada has experience in that area and should therefore be present until Ukraine can address these basic problems.

It will also be important to look at justice and reconciliation. However, reconciliation often requires that justice be done. I think that Canada should support the Ukrainian parliament's request that the International Criminal Court launch an investigation into the crimes committed by the former regime.

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I know that the Ukrainians are going to put their shoulders to the wheel and roll up their sleeves to rebuild. Canada must support them. To do that, we can freeze the assets of Ukrainian leaders. Unless no Ukrainian leader has any assets in Canada—and that may change in any event—we should proceed with freezing their assets. I do not understand why the government is refusing to do so.

We are talking about billions of dollars that have been stolen from the Ukrainian people, money that is just sitting in banks all around the world. That money should be returned to its rightful owners, the Ukrainian people. We should be freezing that money so that no one else can use it in the meantime to escape to a new part of the world, for example.

Our Ukrainian brothers and sisters have the right to a stable, democratic and prosperous country. Canada should be by their side and accompany them in their efforts. Let's work with them in order to help them realize their hopes.

• (1950)

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Chair, as many members are aware, over the weekend we had a convention, with more than 3,000 people from across Canada, where an emergency resolution was introduced. There was support for and discussion about Ukraine. One could sense that people wanted to see change happen and wanted the Canadian government to take action.

I just want to make three quick references to what that delegation passed. The first was that Canada call for an observer mission of at least 500 Canadians, led by a preeminent Canadian, to help oversee the election. Second was that the international community take all necessary steps to ensure that any and all human rights violations in Ukraine are properly investigated, and, as appropriate, prosecuted. Third was that the Government of Canada call upon the IMF to urgently meet with the new Ukrainian leadership to provide economic support and to develop a new plan.

Does the member recognize that there is a great need for us to take specific action? Hopefully, we will get some ideas here this evening. Would she not agree?

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Chair, I totally agree on these three points: the need for election observers, the need to investigate the crimes and human rights abuses that occurred in Ukraine, and the need for the IMF to get involved. In fact, we know that the IMF has been in discussion with officials for the past few days since the government still has not been installed. The process is under way. I agree with the three points mentioned, and I had the opportunity to mention others in my speech. For example, we must think about reconstruction, about immediately freezing the assets, and about supporting Parliament's request for the International Criminal Court to look into this. There is a wide range of measures that could be taken.

[*English*]

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Chair, the member opposite said she believes that we all want to lead by example. I am going to challenge her a bit on this because I would like her to explain something for

me. When the minister went to Kiev between December 3 to 5, he was in the square and met with protestors. At that time, the member for Ottawa Centre, her party's critic on these issues said, in criticizing our minister, that "...joining the protest signals that you're...on one side".

I am interested tonight to know when the New Democrats decided that they needed to join one side, because clearly they seem to be on the same side that we are on now. The member for Ottawa Centre also wanted to know why the minister was even out there speaking to those brave Ukrainian demonstrators.

I wonder if the member could go through the thought processes that the New Democrats went through, from standing squarely on the fence on December 5 to where they have joined with us, and claim to be joining with us, in defending the rights of Ukrainian citizens.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Chair, we have always been very clear during our statements and during debate in the House. We have pushed for renewed peace, dialogue, respect for human rights and so on. That has always been our position. I have always enjoyed working with the hon. member, but I do not understand his vision, his change in position.

[*English*]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague for her very heartfelt and solid speech. She has a lot of foreign affairs experience, and we can respect her opinion in this place.

It is one thing for our government to stand in a square and speak to the protestors, but it is another thing for the government to step up and commit the scale of resources that is going to be needed to help Ukraine get on its feet, to provide rule of law and a democratic government system.

I know the member has had many experiences working in other foreign countries. I had the privilege of working in Mexico, Indonesia, and Bangladesh, and there were major Canadian infusions of dollars to the order of, in some cases, \$80 billion to support the development of good governance. Around the world, donors are now getting together.

Does the member think it would be leadership that Canada could provide, by going over to Ukraine with a delegation of Foreign Affairs and CIDA officials and leading a gathering of the donor nations in how they can work together to provide the solid additional support that Ukraine is definitely going to need?

• (1955)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière: Mr. Chair, I completely agree with that approach. It is always important to work with our partners. Right now, we need to work with the European Union, the United States and the International Monetary Fund to address the urgent situation in Ukraine.

Government Orders

As I said in my speech, we also need to consider the long-term. In addition, we should consider Canada's capacity to promote democracy and respect for human rights, as my colleague rightfully pointed out. We have lost vital institutions on that front. For example, the government abolished Rights and Democracy. However, Canada still has the expertise and we need to invest in it. It is essential that we work with all of our partners in order to co-ordinate our actions and get results.

[English]

Ms. Chrystia Freeland (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I want to start by talking a little about what has happened in Ukraine and how we should understand the incredibly turbulent, incredibly tragic, and incredibly helpful events that have taken place over the past three months.

The most important thing in thinking about Ukraine today is to appreciate that the conflict we have seen has been a very clear political and even moral fight. This has been a fight about what kind of a regime the people of Ukraine want to live in and be a part of. Did they want to live in a democracy that respects the rule of law, the rights of individuals and individual freedoms, or did they want to live under an authoritarian regime?

This conflict began over a simple trade and association agreement. However, it was about this bigger issue. This is important to underscore because sometimes in the account of what is going on, particularly outside of Ukraine, the struggle is framed as a battle over nationalism; it is framed as a battle about religion, language, or culture.

Ukraine certainly has disputes over some of those issues, but it was not the central theme and not what was centrally at stake in this conflict. The Maidan spoke in Ukrainian and the Maidan also spoke in Russian, which is a central point to emphasize.

Part of the reason I underscore this is that we are hearing, and we will continue to hear, a very strong point of view expressed by some Russians, but not all. Many Russians would also like to live in a more democratic regime and have followed the events in the Maidan with great sympathy. However, what we have been hearing, and will continue to hear from some of the Russian authorities, is an effort to frame this conflict as a nationalistic clash; as a civil war scenario.

We are already hearing this. I follow the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Twitter, and we have already seen it starting to label the people of Ukraine as terrorists and as Nazis. Let us be very careful not to give way to that sort of propaganda.

I know that the people in this House and the people in Canada who are listening to us are interested in this issue. Therefore, I am going to offer a footnote to my comments and suggest that people who are interested in this particular aspect of the conflict in Ukraine read a brilliant piece by Timothy Snyder, a professor of history at Yale, which was published recently in the *The New York Review of Books*. It addresses precisely this subject. We are going to be hearing a lot of backlash that says something different about Ukraine and it is very important to be well informed.

We have watched the events in Ukraine closely with fear and anguish for the lives that were lost. What does Ukraine need now?

Everyone who wants democracy to flourish in Ukraine, and I am certain that is everyone in this House, needs to focus now on three things: we need to support and help with new elections; we need to support Ukraine economically; and we need to support the territorial integrity of Ukraine, particularly in relation to some of the claims we are already hearing and may be hearing from Russia.

On the election point, a new election date has been set, which is in May. It is important that we focus on it, that Canada be present and that a high-level Canadian delegation be there in advance. This is going to be the moment when we see a new, fully legitimate government of Ukraine be formed. This is a crucial point. Let us keep our eyes on that prize. International observers are truly essential to give that legitimacy and, to be sure, not only to put our good housekeeping seal of approval on the process, but also that it is in fact genuinely fair and open.

The second issue, which we have already spoken about today, and which I cannot emphasize the importance of too strongly, is that Ukraine now has succeeded in overthrowing an authoritarian regime; a regime whose bloody intentions became ever more evident as this conflict escalated.

● (2000)

What Ukraine does not have yet is a functioning, effective new government, and the real difficulty for this government is that Ukraine was not in great economic shape when this crisis began. The crisis itself has deepened Ukraine's economic difficulties. If we care about the Maidan, if we believe in those values—and surely we all do—we really need to support the democratic authorities of Ukraine now. It needs to be a multilateral, multi-partisan effort. We need to have the IMF and the EU there, and Canada needs to be a part of it.

I cannot emphasize this too much. Ukraine has already had, in our lifetime, over the past just over 20 years, two democratic revolutions. This is the third one. Ukraine became an independent state in 1991. Ukraine then, in its Orange Revolution, overthrew a government that was leaning into authoritarianism in 2004–05.

Let us support Ukraine now so that 10 years from now we are not debating in the House what to do about yet another Ukrainian revolution. Because if that happens, the Ukrainian people who have shown thus far an incredible commitment to democracy, an incredible belief in it, an incredible unwillingness to give way to cynicism, they are going to have enough. They are going to get fed up too. This is a really important moment and it is important not to give way to democracy fatigue, to mission-building fatigue. The really hard part starts now.

One of our hon. members, whom I hope we will be hearing from later tonight, has tremendous experience with Poland and with Poland's own revolutions. The real lesson of Poland is that a powerful civil society is essential for overthrowing an authoritarian regime, but the second lesson is that institutional support from the outside can be the difference between success or failure of those new democratic authorities. The relationship between the EU and the way in which that desire to be part of Europe and the support Europe offered for the building of democratic Poland cannot be overstated. We have to give Ukraine similar support, a similar goal.

Government Orders

The third thing that Ukraine needs now, which is really essential, is we have to support the territorial integrity of Ukraine. The events in Ukraine were not what the Kremlin wanted or anticipated. I really believe, based on statements that we are hearing from the Kremlin, this was a complete surprise. It is very hard for Russia's current authorities to even imagine the Ukrainians as a separate people. We have heard from Vladimir Putin that he considers Ukrainians and Russians to be one people, and Vladimir Putin does not understand that Ukrainians would want to live under a different regime.

We have to make clear to the Russians that the territorial integrity of Ukraine is something that the international community stands behind, and that the Ukrainian people have made their decision in blood and we need to support it. That is essential for Ukrainian democracy and it is essential for geopolitical stability in that entire region.

In closing, I want to make a plea to my colleagues across the aisle. I believe that we have consensus in the House on Ukraine. We have consensus not only because a lot of us are Ukrainian Canadians or have Ukrainian Canadians in our ridings—the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona has many of my Ukrainian Canadian family members in her riding—but also because we all believe in democracy. It is such a core Canadian value.

Let us fight here about the political issues where we generally disagree. Let us fight about income splitting. Let us disagree about Keystone, but let us not make Ukraine a political football. Her people have died for this revolution; let us not diminish their sacrifice. I do not think anyone in the House wants to do that. If we can say to the people of Ukraine that we are united in supporting them, what a strong message that would send to them.

• (2005)

It says to them that it is not about party politics in Canada. The whole country supports them. We can set a fine example for the people of Ukraine. Sure, we disagree about things, but there are also some values that we share, and we are willing to set those disagreements aside to support them.

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Chair, the member wants to speak to us of lessons. I guess she is trying to convince us that she and her party are really serious about this issue. It must have hurt her deeply, as she claims Ukrainian-Canadian heritage, to have heard the comments of her leader last weekend.

She wants us to join together and speak and work together in consensus—

Mr. Scott Simms: That is pretty cheap. You know what, that is pretty cheap. You are cheap.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Chair, I do not know if the member opposite wants to speak.

She wants to work together with consensus while they are heckling us, of course. I just want to ask her if she can assure us that her leader understands now that this is not a joking matter. Can she assure us that he understands that it is, in fact, a matter of life and death for the Ukrainian people?

Ms. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I have to say that I am really disappointed that this is the response from the hon. member about

remarks that were meant to address not our own partisan squabbles but the very real issue of democracy and the future of Ukraine. This is a really big issue. This is an issue that has historic significance. Passing remarks on TV shows are not going to have historic significance.

I want to quickly respond to the in-passing slight about my “claimed” Ukrainian-Canadian heritage. This is not a debate about me, so I am not going to go into it, but I would like to assure the hon. member and everyone in the House that my own personal commitment to Ukraine is lifelong, sincere, and deep, as is my commitment to the Liberal Party.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the member for Toronto Centre for her heartfelt comments. Of course, I am proud to have her family in my constituency.

As the member is well aware, a good portion of Ukrainian Canadians live in my city. I was proud to spend Sunday evening with them, viewing the incredible posters from the Maidan that were produced in December at the beginning of the issue. Immediately before that, there was a memorial service in the square in Edmonton. It was very heartfelt.

As well, I can attest to the fact that the hon. member's mother helped to write the constitution of Ukraine, which is now being restored.

It is absolutely incumbent on the House to show examples of how co-operation can proceed toward a good end. The sitting government of Ukraine is now a combination of all of those opposition parties, which shows how they can come together, even though they have a diversity of views, to reform the way that they operate under the government and move forward together.

I wonder if the member would support the invitation I would extend to the government side, which is that a nice gesture would have been to include a delegation of all the parties in the House to show that we share a common support for the people of Ukraine that continues and that is very strong.

• (2010)

Ms. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, I thank the member for her remarks. I am really grateful to her for mentioning my late mother, who did indeed devote a big portion of her life to helping to write the democratic constitution of Ukraine.

I do agree that it is a strong message that Canada could send. I would like to emphasize that I have tremendous respect for many of the members of the House in other parties, and particularly for those of Polish descent who have great and hard-won experience of what it means to fight for democracy and who have been great friends of Ukraine.

A great conclusion to our own debate this evening would be to set an example for the people of Ukraine. We are asking them to come together after literally killing each other. Surely having just heckled one another and fired a few cheap verbal shots, we could say democracy and the future of Ukraine are more important than that.

Government Orders

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Chair, I would like to mention something to the member for Toronto Centre, but before that, I would like to reply to another comment that was made about the posters that were in Edmonton from the Maidan. I am sorry I missed that, but I got to see the posters first-hand in December in Euromaidan when I was there. I felt it was very important to be there.

What I found when I was there, which was encouraging, was that the protesters and demonstrators were not just Ukrainian-speaking Ukrainians but Russian-speaking Ukrainians. Tatars were there as well.

I felt comfortable that yes, this is a terrible time they are going through, but maybe it bodes well for the future and maybe we have a chance in the politics of the future, because in the past there has been a linguistic divide and an east-west divide. I feel there is the possibility of doing that.

When we are working on democratic evolution and improvement, I would like the member to comment on whether she would have some suggestions or ideas on how we can incorporate into that not just working with the political parties but working on linguistic inclusiveness from across Ukraine. As we can see today, there is too much of a divide there, and we must somehow do this. We must visit not just the western part of Ukraine on a regular basis but also the eastern part, the Crimea part, so that somehow we can encourage the constitution to be more inclusive. What would the member suggest we could do toward that end?

Ms. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, the hon. member for Edmonton East makes an excellent point about Ukraine, and as someone who went to high school in Edmonton, I think it is delightful that the Edmonton caucus, if there is such a thing, speaks about Ukraine with such good information and such insight and warmth.

I very strongly agree with the hon. member for Edmonton East. The Maidan really was a multilingual place. It was a place where Russian was spoken proudly as part of the conversation.

Something that I learned living in Ukraine was the extent to which Ukraine is truly a bilingual culture and society. There is almost no one in Ukraine who does not understand both Russian and Ukrainian perfectly, and most Ukrainians speak both languages. It is helpful that those languages are not too far away from one another. If one begins, as I did, as a reporter arriving in Ukraine speaking only Ukrainian, learning Russian is not as hard, and if one begins as a speaker only of Russian, learning Ukrainian is not as hard. The Ukrainians start from a strong base.

I strongly agree with the hon. member for Edmonton East that something we need to do as an outside friend of Ukraine is to urge Ukrainians today, the Maidan having won, to double down on the democracy part of the message and be as inclusive as possible. That is absolutely essential.

I absolutely agree with the suggestion of the hon. member for Edmonton East, which I think was also a suggestion by the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, that one thing Canada may be able to share with Ukraine is its experience living as a bilingual country and multicultural society, particularly given that Ukrainians trust us,

given our strong Ukrainian-Canadian community and given our record as a country of supporting Ukraine. They trust us to have Ukraine's best interests at heart, and sharing our experience of bilingualism and multiculturalism is something Canada could uniquely do to help. Let us show them Canadian unity and help them with that.

● (2015)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I am very thankful for the comments from the member for Toronto Centre. In the last part of her speech when she was concluding, she might have said something in Ukrainian. I was hoping she could give the actual conclusion of her opening comments.

Ms. Chrystia Freeland: Mr. Chair, the hon. member is from Winnipeg, another city that has lots of great Ukrainian Canadians.

The first line of the Ukrainian national anthem is "*Shche ne vmerla Ukrayina*". That means Ukraine has not yet died. To me, that says a lot about the extent to which Ukraine as a nation and Ukrainians as a people have lived on the edge of survival.

We now have an opportunity—Ukrainians themselves have fought and died for it, and the rest of the world can help them—to get them to a place where, from now on, that anthem will be about their history, not about their present. Let us work—

The Assistant Deputy Chair: Before we go to resuming debate, I have a reminder for hon. members. I appreciate that in the less formal nature of a take note debate, members do wish to exchange debate across the floor to one another, which is entirely appropriate for this kind of debate. I would just ask hon. members to glance at the Chair from time to time so that I can give a signal as to how their time is going. I will try to keep an eye on that and give members as much opportunity as I can to finish the statement they are in.

Resuming debate, the hon. Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs.

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Chair, one of the things I want to point out tonight is the tremendous commitment that the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs have shown to this issue right from the beginning of the crisis.

We can go back to November 21, when we first heard from Ukraine and from its leader that they were going to sever their ties and the agreement they were supposed to have signed with the EU and then move towards an association with Russia.

It was only about three days later, on November 24, when hundreds of thousands of people gathered in Kiev. A couple of days later, when it looked as though the protests were beginning to wind down a little bit, the Ukrainian police attacked the protesters and really set this off.

I see my colleague getting a little excited here, so I would like to point out that I am going to share my time with my colleague from South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale.

In early December, our minister went to Kiev. As I mentioned earlier, the opposition was confused as to why he would be there. He went out and spent some time with the demonstrators and expressed our support for their position.

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From there it took off. We had a debate here in the House on December 10. The real troubles escalated throughout December and January. On January 22, a couple of protestors were shot and lost their lives while working toward freedom. The ceasefire that was put in place temporarily was broken by January 25. The violence escalated from there.

This government moved early. On January 28, we put travel bans in place on their key government leaders. Around the middle of February, on February 18, there was more extreme violence. On that date, we decided we were going to provide assistance directly to Ukraine and to the protestors there. We made a commitment to provide medical assistance and help to them.

On February 20, we moved to extend that ban. We then began to work toward putting sanctions in place. I think every one of us was very happy to see, on February 21, that we really did not have to do that, because Yanukovich left his position. We believe Ukraine will judge him and will judge his supporters. We see clearly that the judicial system in Ukraine is already looking for him. They have an arrest warrant out for him.

The travel ban had been instituted and then extended, and I think there has been some confusion about sanctions. I heard some news reports. I just want to talk a bit about that.

The same measures on travel bans and sanctions that were announced by the Prime Minister, that we were working on last week, are calibrated and will be calibrated to respond to the developments that take place in Ukraine. The reality is that travel bans remain in effect for those individuals who were covered by them previously, and we will continue to watch that situation.

We had some discussion today at the foreign affairs committee about these bans and what they meant, but the reality is that the bans are on, they were on, and they stayed on the individuals they covered before. The sanctions that were going to be placed did not then need to be carried through, because Yanukovich left, and we are just waiting to see how the situation in Ukraine develops. They will be calibrated to respond to what takes place.

We continue to work with our like-minded partners to coordinate an international response. It has been exciting, as one of the nations that has led the fight, to see that the changes taking place now in Ukraine will be, we believe, dramatic, and we hope that they will be permanent. We believe they acted legitimately in naming Speaker Turchinov as the acting president pending the May 25 elections. Today we see they have now put a government in place. Interim Prime Minister Yatsenyuk is in place, and the cabinet is to be confirmed tomorrow.

I again want to acknowledge the leadership of the Minister of Foreign Affairs, who is leading a delegation to Ukraine to affirm and recognize the new government, give them our support, and let them know we stand behind them. I should acknowledge the support we are getting from around the world as well, including from the Secretary General of the Ukrainian World Congress, who has expressed his gratitude on behalf of the Ukrainian World Congress to our Prime Minister's government and praised the individual efforts of our Minister of Foreign Affairs for his leadership and resilient

position in supporting Ukraine towards democracy and ending the current tyranny.

We have been privileged to be able to be a part of working towards these changes and helping the Ukrainian people realize their freedom and democracy.

● (2020)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Chair, I thank my hon. colleague for his speech.

We think it is important to support the Ukrainian parliament's request that the International Criminal Court investigate what went on in Ukraine.

Does the hon. member support that position?

[*English*]

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Chair, we are waiting for the Ukrainian government to be put in place. Our Minister of Foreign Affairs and delegation will be there to recognize it and to give it some support, and to allow the world to see that as well.

The members of the Ukrainian parliament are going to be capable of making those decisions and moving ahead. We would like to work with them. We talked earlier about providing them with some of the resources we have, in terms of helping them develop the institutional strength and the judicial strength they need. At committee today, we heard about how important that is. We have been leaders around the world in those areas, as well, and I would expect that we will continue to lead in those areas.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I wonder if the member might be able to give an opinion on the issue of working with all political entities in the House of Commons and how critically important it is. Let me give an example, by using what I believe Canadians would want to see. Given the very serious nature of what is happening in Ukraine today, all political parties inside the House have been very responsible in coming forward and showing support, in a multitude of different ways. For example, having observers go there is something that has been talked about at great length.

I have a question for the member, who I know has a considerable amount of influence with the Minister of Foreign Affairs. Does he feel that it would be advisable for the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the government to work with the opposition parties to come up with ideas and thoughts? It has been suggested, and I would also add, that we look at a minimum of 500 observers going to Ukraine. I remember when I sat on the foreign affairs committee it was 1,200 that was being talked about at the committee.

Does the member see any role that would allow for opposition members to have more input, in informal as well as formal ways, with the Minister of Foreign Affairs?

Government Orders

• (2025)

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Chair, we understand the challenges the opposition has come through to get to the position that we have been at since the beginning. As I mentioned earlier, the minister was in Kiev in early December and was willing to stand with the protestors. Our NDP colleagues were wondering why he was doing that. We are glad to see that they have finally joined with us. We understand some of the issues and problems that the Liberal leader has had over the past week in defining his position on this as well. However, we certainly look forward to working with everyone in this House, and I would say Canadians across the country.

The member mentioned the issue of sending election observers. We talked about that at committee today, and we talked about the reality that there are probably going to be a couple of rounds of elections. We have certainly participated in the past in supervising those election and helping to ensure that they were fair and democratic, and we look forward to doing that in the future as well.

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Chair, today in the foreign affairs committee, one of our interveners was the Ambassador of Religious Freedom. He was telling us a bit about some of the things he has encountered. I wonder if my colleague would like to speak to some of the things that were discussed.

Mr. David Anderson: Mr. Chair, I wish I had another several minutes to speak about this because they are important issues.

Ambassador Bennett was in Kiev in January. He has shown great leadership on this file. He has touched a number of places around this world where there are challenges of religious freedom. He talked today about seeing first-hand the plight of the Ukrainian people, and specifically the churches. As well, he talked about the leadership that the churches can provide. They provide shelter and refuge for people; they have provided spiritual direction for them. He feels, and he certainly made a strong argument today, that the churches play a major role in the future of Ukraine. We need to work with them as well.

Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC): Mr. Chair, since our last emergency debate on Ukraine, on January 27, the developments, and more particularly what has happened over the weekend, can only be described as incredible. Canada mourns the lives that were lost, and we are thankful that peace has been restored. Throughout this crisis, Canada has stood firmly behind the people of Ukraine for a free and democratic country, and we will continue to support Ukraine in the transition through this pivotal moment of its history.

It is important to remind the House of how this crisis was created. Canada was both shocked and disappointed when the Ukrainian government suddenly announced on November 21 that it would not pursue an association agreement and 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, and a divergence from Ukraine's path of a deeper partnership and integration with the west. Canada believed then, and believes now, that Ukraine's greatest opportunities for a better future lie in association with the European Union.

While the protests started out against Yanukovich's sudden reversal, of course, the voice of the people united to express their disillusion and discontent with much larger issues, such as corruption and the siphoning off of national assets.

One day after our debate on December 10, Ukrainian authorities ordered the use of riot police against peaceful protesters in Kiev's Maidan square. Our 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.

A few days later, I personally visited Kiev with the Canadian delegation. We visited the protesters in Maidan square and encouraged the Ukrainians to find a peaceful solution to the crisis. The Ukrainians I met are tired of the corruption in their nation, and they want to embrace Europe and the west. They do not want to go backwards to become a satellite of the Russian empire once again. The protesters were positive, hopeful about their future, and determined to see that their demands would be met. Sadly, as they marched with the hope of changing the future of their country and becoming closer to Europe, braving harsh winter conditions in order to stage 24-hour protests, President Yanukovich again blighted Ukrainians' faith for a better future.

On December 17, Mr. Yanukovich travelled to Russia to meet with President Putin, where he accepted a \$15-billion aid package along with reduced prices for gas. While the deal provided an urgent boost to Ukraine's fast deteriorating economy, it was unclear what conditions were imposed by Russia. However, far from quelling protesters, the deal had the exact opposite effect. Massive rallies took place in Kiev and other parts of Ukraine. We now know the outcome of those protests. There were dozens who were killed or seriously injured. Yanukovich has now abandoned his office, and a transitional government is being formed in anticipation of free elections to be held later this year.

I would like to offer a few observations on the current situation. While the oppressive Yanukovich regime is gone, Ukraine faces major challenges in the months and years ahead. The economy there remains fragile, and foreign assistance is essential. Canada and the west, through the International Monetary Fund, are prepared to provide an assistance package, and \$15 billion has been set aside by the IMF. While Europe and the west provide Ukraine's best options in terms of expanded trading opportunities, reaching agreements will require negotiation and compromise.

We also call on the Russian government to continue to respect the sovereignty of Ukraine. I was very encouraged to hear the Russian ambassador's recent comments indicating that his nation will not intervene militarily.

In terms of the domestic political situation, the variety and number of political parties present challenges in reaching a consensus on the many important issues facing the nation. Regardless, we call on all parties and leaders to respect the rights of all Ukrainians. Ensuring minority rights are protected demonstrates a nation's commitment to freedom and the rule of law. The rule of law also demands that those who committed crimes, firing on unarmed protesters, be brought to justice and tried impartially.

Government Orders

Even as the barricades come down and people return to their normal lives, the events at Maidan and cities across Ukraine will always serve as a lasting reminder of the deep commitment to freedom that the Ukrainian people have. It is a commitment that Canadians share, and we will stand by Ukraine at this challenging time of transition as they aspire to a better future.

• (2030)

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP): Mr. Chair, when I was paying attention to my hon. colleague's speech, I thought it was particularly interesting that he mentioned economic issues. I think the political economy of Ukraine is one of the central elements of what is going on there. To focus more particularly on energy policy, when I was in Europe for the CETA agreement study, the committee heard a number of things about what Europe could offer as an energy package to eastern Europe. The weakness that the European economy has gone through has made it difficult for Europe to offer a robust energy package; therefore, this issue of energy in Ukraine has to be solved. Some of the aid that is going toward economic aid should definitely go to ensuring that Ukraine is not dependent on Russian energy sources. If not, this problem may reoccur in the future. I wonder if my hon. colleague has any thoughts on that.

Whenever a democracy is fragile, it should concern us all. It concerns me. I have been paying particular attention to this, though I am not of Ukrainian descent, nor do I have many Ukrainians in my riding, although I am sure there are few. However, it is of concern to me as a democrat and a parliamentarian. We should all be concerned when a democracy is fragile.

Does my hon. colleague have any thoughts on the energy policy side of things?

• (2035)

Mr. Russ Hiebert: Mr. Chair, for a time my colleague and I served together on the trade committee. I fully appreciate the information and what he learned on his visit to Europe as we were studying the CETA agreement.

He makes a good point. Part of the reason that Ukraine is in this situation is because it does not have a lot of options. It is heavily dependent on Russian oil and gas, and desperately dependent on some financial stability, which was promised by Russia.

There is no doubt that even with the IMF coming in and providing a \$15-billion loan, things will almost certainly get more difficult than better. Almost every time the IMF comes along it provides support, but it is not without conditions. Sometimes the conditions can be the hardest part of the medicine. However, the alternative is worse. We have seen that the alternative has been rejected. Therefore, Ukraine may not have any other choice than to take the package provided to it, including the conditions that go along with that.

The European Union has promised some amount of support. What that number will be we do not yet know. We do not have all of the information we need as a country to assess, with our partners, what we can do to help. That is why it is so important that the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the rest of the delegation, who are departing as we speak for Ukraine, speak with this intermediate government and assess what kind of support is needed. That is the beginning of the conversation. We will know much more once they get back and we have had that discussion.

Ms. Chrystia Freeland (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I want to ask a question that is pegged to the comment made by my hon. colleague from the New Democratic Party. I was especially struck by his comment that he is not Ukrainian Canadian and does not have Ukrainian Canadians in his riding. I think it is great to hear that hon. member speaking this evening.

As a Ukrainian Canadian, I am proud of the work that the Ukrainian Canadian community has done to directly support the people in Ukraine and to inform our parliamentarians. However, it is essential that we not see this as an issue simply for Ukrainian Canadians or people elected by them. This is an issue for all Canadians. I would love to hear from the hon. member on the opposite bench as to whether he agrees with that.

Mr. Russ Hiebert: Mr. Chair, let me first make it clear that I do have Ukrainian descent, and my wife has Ukrainian descent, and I have Ukrainians in my constituency. However, that is not the only reason I am here. I am also here because, as a country, we need to support democracies around the world. We need to be there when they are in crisis. We need to help them re-establish freedom, human rights, and the rule of law, and that is exactly what our government has done and what we intend to do.

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Chair, I am pleased to once again take part in this special debate on the situation in Ukraine.

Canada has a very special relationship with Ukraine, given that there are over 1.2 million Canadians who claim Ukrainian descent, that Canada was the first country to recognize newly independent Ukraine, and given our history of working with Ukraine to help it evolve into a democracy. I personally have served three times as an election observer in Ukraine.

I am not of Ukrainian descent, but I am very proud to have many folks of Ukrainian descent in my riding and many Ukrainian institutions. There are two different credit unions, seniors' services, and newcomers' services. People of Ukrainian descent have shaped the wonderful community that is the riding of Parkdale—High Park, which I am proud to serve.

Many people of Eastern European descent live in our community. There are people from the Balkans, Lithuanians, Latvians, and people of Polish descent. They are people who have travelled along the road to independence and have fought hard for their independence in what are today successful, thriving democracies.

I know from the many people who have contacted my office that they have agonized over the current situation in Ukraine. In my experience working with the community of Parkdale—High Park, and having been in Ukraine and met with many Ukrainians during my time as an election observer, I know how badly Ukrainians want a normal democracy. They want a democracy that respects the rule of law, that respects human rights, and that is free of corruption. They want a democracy where they can have business investments and where businesses know that the rule of law will be followed.

Government Orders

This has obviously been a rocky road for Ukrainians. They have impressed on me so many times how badly and how strongly they want to see a normal democracy in Ukraine.

The recent terrible tragic events have hit home especially hard for the people in Parkdale—High Park, and indeed right across this country and around the world.

There have been many rallies and gatherings in Toronto in solidarity with Ukrainians. Just last Sunday, hundreds of people were at Queen's Park, the Ontario legislature in Toronto, and it was a sombre and solemn moment when the long list of names of those who died in the recent events was read. They came from the Maidan, from Kyiv, the capital of Ukraine, and from other cities as well. This was a sad and tragic loss. From Canada's perspective, we have to do everything possible to help stabilize the situation and prevent further bloodshed.

There are many challenges on the road ahead. The temperature has been turned down, at least for now. A priority has to be that Canada do whatever is possible to help resolve the current situation with a political solution and that further violence not take place.

Our party and our foreign affairs critic have long called for sanctions. The government brought in sanctions.

● (2040)

I was at the foreign affairs committee today, and in questioning, government officials were vague about the travel sanctions that have been put in place. They could not tell us what form these travel sanctions were taking.

They have also put in abeyance the economic sanctions against those responsible for the violence and bloodshed in Ukraine. This is very concerning, because this transition period may well be the very time when they, through corruption, are trying to take vast sums out of Ukraine. Now is the time we should be ensuring that these economic sanctions have teeth. However, we heard directly from government officials that the economic sanctions have been put in abeyance. In fact, they are not being put into effect. I would like to hear from the government side about this, because this is very concerning.

I also have joined with my colleagues in advocating for a high-level parliamentary delegation on the ground in Ukraine, which our foreign affairs critic has long advocated, to keep the temperature down. They could do whatever is possible to help form a political solution and offer a model of democracy where parties with differing views can work together for a bigger issue. In this case, the bigger issue is democracy in Ukraine.

We were saddened and quite frustrated by the decision of the government to take that suggestion from our party but to exclude opposition parliamentarians. We think that is frankly a very sad decision, a very immature decision, on the part of the government. We need to be co-operating and working together to help Ukrainians do the same thing: co-operate and work together for the greater good, which is the success of Ukraine.

Constituents from Parkdale—High Park who have contacted me were frankly a bit saddened that partisanship would trump the more important question of democracy and human rights in Ukraine. We

need to work together. We need to do everything possible to help Ukraine, under its current leadership, be as successful as possible.

Ukraine is in a unique situation. It could be open to the west and take advantage of the incredible success of the markets in the EU and democratize in a western fashion. Yet as a country that has long been close to Russia, it could maintain that close relationship with Russia and be a completely independent and modern democracy, which is what people in that country so badly want.

Our country has a special history of sending election observers and assisting with democratic development in Ukraine. We would like to see this continue. We should have a full observer mission to assist with the upcoming elections in Ukraine. We need to be doing whatever is possible to assist with having free, normal, democratic media and democratic institutions.

Young interns from Ukraine come to our offices on Parliament Hill. I have had several work in my office. The hope they represent is so impressive. If it were up to them alone, the future of Ukraine would be in excellent hands. They are truly inspirational, and we need to make sure that the hopes and dreams of those young Ukrainians are not in vain, that they can fulfill those hopes, and that Ukraine can succeed and play its full role as a modern democracy. All parliamentarians in this House need to do everything we can to make sure that such a future succeeds.

● (2045)

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Chair, it is interesting to watch my colleagues on the other side in their migration from accusing our government of standing up for only one side. Yet it would appear now that opposition members have migrated in this direction. My colleague spoke very favourably of Ukraine making better and stronger relationships with the European Union.

Does my hon. colleague support a free trade agreement for Ukraine with the European Union, yes or no?

● (2050)

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Chair, I am not sure I heard the question correctly. Is the hon. member asking me if I think Ukraine should form a free trade agreement with the European Union? Surely that is up to Ukrainians to decide. It is not up to Canada to decide. I am confused by that question.

We would hope that a modern, free, democratic Ukraine would make the decisions that are in the best interests of its citizens. We would hope that those decisions mean it is open to economic relationships with the European Union, but surely we would not want to impose our views on Ukraine. Democracy is about the people in that country making their own decisions. In supporting democracy, we want them to be free to decide their future. Surely that is what this Parliament should support.

Government Orders

Ms. Chrystia Freeland (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would like to start by saying that I believe I just heard the commitment of the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park to Ukraine impugned, and I think I heard a suggestion that she is somehow a Johnny-come-lately to the Ukrainian cause. Of course, I sincerely hope that Parkdale—High Park will become a Liberal riding again one day. Having declared that partisanship myself, I am Ukrainian Canadian. I go to all of our events. I have seen the hon. member for Parkdale—High Park there. She has been very committed to the Ukrainian Canadian community for a very long time and has worked very hard to embrace our community.

Given her knowledge of Ukraine and her commitment to it, I would like to ask about her views on the evolution of the Ukrainian-Russian relationship. It is very easy right now for Ukrainians to feel tremendous animosity toward Russia, given the role Russia played in fomenting this conflict. It is easy for us also to try to see this as a replay, as a new Cold War. I believe that is a bad outcome for the Ukrainian people, for Ukraine, and for the world. Does the hon. member agree, and how does she see this relationship evolving?

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Chair, I want to thank my colleague from Toronto Centre for her, I think, compliment on the work I have done with the Ukrainian community. It is true that not only have I been an election observer for three elections in Ukraine, but I have certainly participated in countless events with the Ukrainian community in Toronto, whether it is festivals and fairs or street festivals. The largest street festival in North America happens to be in Parkdale—High Park. Certainly when necessary, I have joined with the community in many rallies and demonstrations in support of democracy and human rights.

While there has been great concern about the role Russia has played and some of the decisions it has made with respect to Ukraine, again, I want to say that Ukraine is positioned in a unique situation: while it can be open to the west and take advantage of trade with the EU, it also has a long-time relationship with Russia. I do not know that it is helpful for Canadians to try to determine what that relationship is. Ukrainians will make their own decisions in the best interests of Ukraine, and surely that is as it should be.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Chair, I would first like to thank my hon. colleague from Parkdale—High Park for her speech. I know that she has the best interests of the Ukrainian people at heart. She mentioned the excellent Ukrainian interns who come work for us for several months at a time. It is a wonderful and very important program.

My question today has to do with how accessible our universities and our Canadian system is to Ukrainian students. This is something that we have felt very strongly about for a number of years now. For quite some time, I have been asking the government to try to improve things in that regard. I truly believe that making it easier for young Ukrainians to access student visas would be an excellent and very simple way for Canada to improve democracy and human rights in Ukraine. We know that giving young people access to other countries and the opportunity to see what life is like elsewhere is an excellent way to promote such improvements.

I would like to hear the member's comments and thoughts on that.

• (2055)

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague, especially for all the work she has done for the Ukrainian community. She has also visited Ukraine several times and demonstrated considerable solidarity with the Ukrainian people.

As I said earlier, the young interns from Ukraine who visited Canada and worked in our offices truly represent an important hope for the future of Ukraine, a future that includes democracy and respect for human rights.

The same can be said about young Ukrainian students. It is important to offer them opportunities to study in Canada. Access to education in Canada is very important. The member's idea is a very good one. It is an opportunity that the Government of Canada could give to Ukrainian youth that could help create a real democracy in that country.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Chair, I would like to comment on my colleague's comments about members of Parliament interacting with members of Ukraine's parliament. Perhaps an opportunity will come up so we can do just that. There is the Canada-Ukraine parliamentary group and there is the Ukraine-Canada parliamentary group. There will be an election coming up; that is pretty sure. Perhaps at that time, there will be MPs travelling to Ukraine and many of them will be dispersed throughout the regions. It would be an excellent time to interact with members in the various regions of Ukraine or maybe getting meetings together with the Ukraine-Canada parliamentary committee and having some introductory discussions on how we can work together, not only on democracy items but also on linguistic inclusiveness and other aspects of inclusiveness of the various regions of east and west.

Perhaps my colleague could respond to that.

Ms. Peggy Nash: Mr. Chair, as vice-chair of the Canada-Ukraine Parliamentary Friendship Group, obviously, I would welcome the idea of this kind of exchange with our peers from Ukraine. I think that is a helpful suggestion.

It was in this same spirit that we suggested, initially, that a high-level delegation go to Ukraine to show the spirit of co-operation among parliamentarians, to show that, yes, we may disagree on a whole range of issues, but we can work together. We work together on committees and on these friendship committees, such as the Canada-Ukraine friendship committee. We put the interests of Ukraine first and we put our partisanship aside. It was in that spirit that we proposed, initially, that a high-level delegation go to Ukraine as quickly as possible to not only show by example but also to offer concrete solutions to our parliamentarian peers in Ukraine, given the current and recent tragedies that have taken place there.

Government Orders

I welcome his idea, and I would urge him to encourage his own government to embrace that spirit of co-operation and goodwill and support for democracy, in the hope that perhaps it will have a change of heart and put partisanship aside for the good of the larger issue of democracy and support for Ukraine.

• (2100)

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Chair, just for the record, I am not a Ukrainian Canadian. I was born and raised in Poland, but I do have many Ukrainian Canadians in my constituency. I have a beautiful Ukrainian Catholic church in my constituency and many businesses.

I wanted to take part in this debate because I can truly relate to the struggles of the people in Ukraine and what has been going on in Ukraine over these past few months.

I will be splitting my time with my colleague from Edmonton East.

I agree with the member for Toronto Centre that to fully understand what was going on and to really help Ukraine, we have to understand the historical aspect of the Ukrainians' struggle for independence. I am not talking about the past 24 years, since 1991. It started a long time before that.

I would like to quote two lines from the poem *Testament*, or *Zapovit*, written by a Ukrainian icon, Taras Shevchenko:

[*Member spoke in Ukrainian and provided the following translation:*]

Bury me, then rise up and break your heavy chains.

[*English*]

This was written over 150 years ago. Ukraine had to wait 130 years after Shevchenko's death to break those chains.

More recently, 10 years ago, during the Orange Revolution, people stood up because after the rigged election they did not accept the results. People did not accept the fact that one of the presidential candidates was being poisoned by secret agents. In 2004 and 2005, after the Orange Revolution, everybody was so hopeful that everything in Ukraine would go smoothly and toward democracy. Unfortunately, that did not happen.

What has happened in the past few months is truly tragic, not only because people died. It is tragic when people die, but it is also tragic that the government used force against people. It was not only the police and the riot police. The government ordered snipers to go on the roof and shoot people randomly. That is something that should not be happening in our times. That is why we should be concerned about what is going to happen next.

Today, we have good news. The new government of national unity was formed. The young journalist, the lady who was beaten up and left to die, is part of that group. A gentleman, whose name I think is Mr. Bulatov, who was also beaten up and had to be brought to a hospital in Lithuania, is also part of that group.

Ukraine will need a lot of help and guidance. There is truly hard work in front of all Ukrainians.

I would also like to quote the next lines from the national anthem:

[*Member spoke in Ukrainian and provided the following translation:*]

Our enemies will vanish like dew in the sun, and we should rule, brothers, in a free land of our own.

[*English*]

That is the important part: "our own". The Ukrainian people do not want to be ruled by anybody anymore.

• (2105)

Ukraine has a big neighbour, but unfortunately, Russia is not democratic, which is the main problem. It is very hard to be hopeful when one's neighbour is trying to go back to Soviet times.

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Chair, we have heard many times tonight about the size of the Ukrainian population here in Canada. I believe there are 1.3 million people in Canada who trace their ancestry directly back to Ukraine. We have even had some colleagues here in the House tonight identify as having immediate Ukrainian family.

I wonder if my colleague could speak to the participation of people who are Ukrainian Canadians who can speak on the situation in Ukraine. Does he think there is any room for us to mobilize that group of people here to help bring democracy and peace in Ukraine?

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Chair, I have a lot of contact with Ukrainian Canadians, with the Canadian Ukrainian Congress, and with people who organize and come to the events. They were reacting to what was going on in Ukraine very rapidly.

I understand that the Canadian delegation now going to Ukraine and led by our Minister of Foreign Affairs includes representatives from the Canadian Ukrainian community. I am sure they will be a great help in guiding us in future actions toward Ukraine.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the hon. member for participating in this debate. I had the privilege of travelling with him when we were monitoring the election. We were enclaved together; then we went to opposite locations and ended up together again in Lviv.

I wonder if the member would like to share with us in this take note debate his experiences on the ground; the conviviality and friendship that I am sure he found in the communities he went to in Ukraine, the same as I found in the communities I went to.

I can certainly speak to how profoundly committed I found the Ukrainians to be in getting out to vote. I think it was pretty clear even from the monitoring reports, from the European Commission, and so forth that where the corruption probably occurred was before and then after the voting. Certainly, I saw people turning out in hospitals, mental institutions, even in prisons as well as the suburbs. There were women with baby carriages, elderly people, and some people in wheelchairs wanting to participate in the democratic process.

Government Orders

I wonder if the member could share his experience there and whether that might also speak to the drive we are now seeing in Ukraine to actually form a solid, democratic, human rights and rule-of-law respecting nation.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague opposite for her question, and yes, we did travel to observe an election. We went to different places, but I had a similar experience on the ground there.

To answer her question directly, the great potential Ukraine has is its people. They are well educated and very hard workers. Even if the economic data presented today by different people is not that good, the potential the country has is enormous. If these people are given a chance, they will turn the country around in a relatively short period of time. I am truly positive of this and very optimistic.

• (2110)

Ms. Chrystia Freeland (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the hon. member for Mississauga East—Cooksville for quoting Ukrainian poetry. I wish I were able to quote Adam Mickiewicz in response, but I am not that advanced.

The next line of the poem *Zapovit*, which the member quoted, is:

[Member spoke in Ukrainian and provided the following translation:]

Sprinkle freedom with the blood of the enemy.

[English]

Let us sincerely hope and pray Ukraine does not go there.

I would like to ask the hon. member for Mississauga East—Cooksville to comment on the Polish experience, because Poland, in addition to being a tremendous ally of Ukraine, and Polish Canadians, in addition to being tremendous allies of Ukrainian Canadians here, has the experience of building a democracy at a time when democratic institutions were weak or nonexistent and building it in the shadow of a hostile neighbour.

Are there any lessons from Poland for Ukraine today?

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon: Mr. Chair, I think there is a difference between the two countries. Poland, fortunately, had a tradition of democracy. It was a country before it was partitioned and was so well before the First and Second World Wars.

The Ukrainians did not have that advantage. That is why it is probably more difficult for them to do it, but the great achievement of Ukrainians is the fact that no one dreamed of democracy 25 years ago, yet they have a free country and it should be up to them what they do with their future. I am optimistic that they will turn the country around with our help and the help of others.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Chair, first I would like to express my deepest condolences and sorrow for those heroes who lost their lives or were badly injured in Ukraine, and for their families. I join with others in my great concern for the ongoing crisis in Ukraine. The true price of freedoms and democratic values is paid too many times with the blood and lives of patriots.

I have visited Ukraine 10 times and been there for eight elections. I will take us back and reiterate some of the points I have seen

progressing on this. This is the second time in 10 years that we have seen what I would call a revolution. There was the Orange Revolution, and now we have the Euromaidan revolution. The tactic then was the same as it is now with the same actors and the same players. It was Yanukovich and Putin both times. Yanukovich was removed both times.

The tactics at that time included ballot-box stuffing. I was at a prison in southern Ukraine and have pictures of an empty ballot box brought into a voting area and a bag of ballots. I have the actual picture of it. It was incredible. At that time, there was no consideration or thought that they were doing anything really wrong. As a matter of fact, no one in the area said anything until the person who brought in the ballot box saw me standing there, whereupon he quickly ducked into a corner and put a coat over it. Of the 20 other people who were in that area, no one said anything. It was just another act of the day.

Things have changed since then. Now in the current circumstances after the election of 2010, we have the same actor, but one who now knows how to keep the cheating invisible. They know enough now not to do it visibly like that, where people can take pictures and report it.

During the Orange Revolution in 2004, when I stood on stage in front of 500,000 people, I felt very comfortable being there because I saw the cheating and could directly speak about how their vote was stolen.

After the 2010 election, he was duly accepted by the international community. However, during that election the opposition, Yushchenko and Tymoshenko, split the vote. That was really the problem they had; they could not get together. They lost because they could not bring their factions together. All they did was fight among themselves, which was very unfortunate.

Now Yanukovich is in power. What does he do? He drops all of his promises and commitments, and changes the constitution so that he can have even more power to do more wrong, against the people's wishes. This of course led to Euromaidan and to the beginning of the unrest. The second problem was that the demonstrators were fewer in number. It was said that they were going to disappear and tire of demonstrating, but he could not wait. He had to send in his thugs, who split skulls and spilled blood. That brought out the veterans from Afghanistan who were there to protect their children. That still could have been negated. He still could have made concessions and maybe slowed that down, but as we all know, he accelerated his hideous crimes to the point where he eventually brought out his snipers. That was just revolting to the entire world. He became a pariah to the world, and that made it very easy for them to remove him as a president, which is the way it should be.

Where do we go from here? We are into an election now. What can we do? Some comments have been made here and ideas suggested. There are a number of things we can do, but certainly most Canadians here in this room, and I would say on all sides of the House, are committed to doing what we can to bring this issue forward and return Ukraine to being a country with the international status it deserves, and shall have some day.

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• (2115)

[Translation]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague for his speech. I have heard him speak about Ukraine several times. I know that this issue is very important to him. I am always very moved by his remarks. He personally witnessed the Orange Revolution when he was in Ukraine in 2004. I have always been deeply moved by that, and I am pleased that Canadian parliamentarians can represent us at times that are so important and so vital to Ukraine.

I would like to ask him a question that is similar to the one I asked another hon. member earlier. One of my favourite issues when it comes to the development of democracy in Ukraine involves making it easier for young people to obtain student visas. This would allow young Ukrainians to come to Canada and see for themselves what type of country Canada is and what type of democracy we have. Then, they could return home to help their people and contribute to the democratization of their country.

I would like to hear what my colleague has to say about that. Does he also think that this is a good idea?

[English]

Mr. Peter Goldring: Mr. Chair, I do. I think it will be part of what we can do to help. We can see it from the interns who have been coming here to our offices. I have had an intern from Ukraine for 10 to 12 years now.

I might add that when I returned to Euromaidan and spoke to the crowd there, I was ushered around the square by various interns who have been here in offices in this country. Without their help, I might have had some problems, particularly as my Ukrainian is non-existent.

It worked out very well. We contacted the former intern from my office before I left. I might add, I went on my own nickel. It was very good to have him help us out. Absolutely, I would encourage all parliamentarians to please invite interns to work in their offices if they have not had one previously.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I want to pick up on the real need, and we hear a lot about this, to see the type of forward direction we are seeing today in Ukraine.

There is a great deal of interest by Canadians in ensuring that Canada has a strong delegation of observers there at the end of May. Could the member share some of his personal thoughts? We hear about the potential number of observers. Obviously the greater the number, the larger the potential impact we will have. There are organizations out there that would like to be able to play a role in assisting.

Does the member believe the government has a sense of the number of observers it would like to send over for this critical election in May?

• (2120)

Mr. Peter Goldring: Mr. Chair, I have not heard of any specific numbers.

Given the circumstances, it is comparable to the Orange Revolution. I believe we had some 1,000 Canadians over there for

the Orange Revolution. There was a tremendous number who travelled to monitor the election.

As I was saying earlier, this would be an opportune time to have as many parliamentarians as we can have so that they can interact with parliamentarians there, perhaps across the region. I never travel on these types of election monitoring missions unless I am engaged in other activities while I am there. For example, on the last one, I had the time to visit universities and talk about theology and religious backgrounds. I wanted to delve into the impact of religion on politics in Ukraine. It does have an impact there.

I would again strongly suggest that perhaps an official program be set up so that our parliamentarians can be engaged to interact with the parliamentarians there, and take some time while they are there to help answer some of the questions their parliamentarians have, to give them some guidance and direction, as well as for our parliamentarians to learn from them about how they conduct their political affairs so that we can both gain knowledge from it.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Chair, it is a great privilege to participate in this take note debate. I have appreciated the move toward more conviviality in this place. That is what I experienced in the last take note debate. I had a high regard for all of the members in every part of this place. We are all in this together. We are all *Slava Ukraini*.

New Democrats, as I know do the other parties in this place, stand with the people of Ukraine. My colleagues and I express our deepest condolences to the people of Ukraine for those who lost their lives and those who remain seriously injured. I know that all members in this House tonight share those condolences. We are relieved that the violence has come to an end. We are hopeful that violence will not start up again.

My colleagues and I have been trying to follow closely and there have been missives coming hourly from all parts of the globe, and particularly from Ukraine and Ukrainians across the globe, updating us on what is going on. I understand that as we speak the new Ukrainian government has been formed, and in a few minutes I will speak about the incredible conditions it is trying to place on who it is appointing into its cabinet.

We continue to take guidance from the people of Ukraine, those who we can communicate with in these difficult times, and with the Canadian Ukrainian community. As other colleagues mentioned occurred in their hometown, in Edmonton more than 200 people showed up in very frigid temperatures for a memorial to those who lost their lives in Ukraine. Following that, as my colleague from Edmonton East mentioned, there was a gathering at a residence for Ukrainian students at the University of Alberta to appreciate and look at the posters that were produced during that time in December to try to encourage people to come to the square and to support the rising of the populace toward a more just society. It was very powerful. If members have the opportunity to have the show come to their town, I would encourage it. It is brilliant.

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As many have mentioned, there are almost 1.5 million people of Ukrainian descent in this country. A good many of those are in my province of Alberta and in the city, which I know the hon. member for Edmonton East has shared. In my own constituency, there are many of Ukrainian descent. I have mentioned before that I have had the privilege to share in a beautiful Ukrainian feast on Christmas Eve. The more time I spend with my Ukrainian Canadian friends, the more I think that maybe a bit of me might become Ukrainian. If one lives in Alberta long enough, he or she is bound to pick it up in a certain way.

Free speech and the right to peaceful protests are fundamental to any democracy. That is what Ukrainians are calling for. It is important that as free Canadians, all of us should share some of our time and resources to support them to achieve that which they desire so strongly.

We are pleased that the government has sent a delegation over. We are disappointed however that it did not include representatives of the opposition. I am hopeful that in the next delegations that go, we will have representatives from all parties. Why is that? Because Ukraine itself is now forming a government of many parties together. Maybe even some of the people from the Party of Regions have stepped up to the plate, to join in a more democratic form of government. Therefore, it is important that we show good faith and show that co-operation is possible.

The Ukrainian Canadian community, including the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, has called on Canada to show leadership in the international community. I know that all of us are turning to the UCC for leadership. We all have components of that in our own communities. The UCC is calling for us to support the Ukrainian people to achieve a lasting political solution that includes justice for human rights victims and respect for democratic freedoms. It is my understanding that those measures are on the forefront of the considerations and conditions for appointment to their new government.

To date, there has been a lot of support by Canada to the economic and democratic development of Ukraine. Back in 2009, I think Ukraine was designated as one of the priorities for Canadian aid through CIDA. Considerable money was dedicated, a lot of which was not only for economic development, particularly in small and medium industries, but also for civil engagement to a certain extent. A year and a half ago, a number of the members in the House today participated in a mission to Ukraine to look into concerns about the erosion of the rule of law and democracy.

• (2125)

We met with chambers of commerce, human rights activists, and opposition and government members. We certainly heard a lot of ideas on measures they would like to take and how we could support them. It is incumbent upon us to be working with other nations around the world to figure out a way for the government of Ukraine to put measures in place so that it can start combatting the corruption, which is endemic in its society.

I have worked in other countries where there is the same problem of corruption. It stems from simply not paying their civil servants enough, who then get on the take so they can survive and look after their families. That is going to be one of the biggest challenges the

Ukraine government will face and will require some international expertise in. It has been offered to other nations around the world, and I think that is one of the areas where Canada can really contribute.

Our delegation that went with Foreign Affairs made a number of recommendations to the Government of Canada out of that. We all unanimously agreed. There were a couple of additional ones that our party made. However, we did advocate, immediately and forcefully, for the prompt release of political leaders. Of course, we are all grateful that Tymoshenko has been released. There are others who have been in prison. There are others who have had to leave the country and hopefully, they will be able to come back and participate fairly in Ukraine.

We called for the strengthening of the rule of law. Of course, that has been what has fallen apart. What I am hearing a lot from people, including members of parliament in Ukraine, is it would be absolutely critical that the new government move toward justice for all and toward democracy, not revenge. Coming out of the heat of the moment and the reprehensible killing of people in the streets, there will be a lot of calls for revenge against the police and judges who allowed these activities. It is incumbent on us to send experts to work with Ukraine's department of justice and its police. We have done that before in other nations, and I think we can do that again.

Out of that mission, the New Democrats, particularly, called for a careful look at protecting Canadian investments in Ukraine and making sure they are protected from corruption. I spoke to a representative of the Canadian Ukrainian Chamber of Commerce just today, before I came to the debate. He said that a number of people in Canada are looking into some kind of investment fund that Canadians could invest in to support Ukraine. However, they want to be very careful that there will be stronger measures to protect against corruption, because we want to protect Canadian investments.

Certainly, Ukraine is cash-strapped. We have heard the pleas for support. It may well have lost the Russian support and it will need a major infusion of cash just to keep its government going, let alone its economy. One thing Canada could do, and it has shown leadership in the past—and I was part of that in Indonesia, where Canada gave considerable aid in the 1980s and into the 1990s—is we could show the leadership and bring together the donors from around the world, to sit down and try to coordinate where we could best give the expertise, the assistance, and the dollars, and where they could be targeted to move Ukraine forward in the best way.

As the Ukrainians are expressing very clearly, what went on in the Maidan is not about the EU versus Russia. It is about the call for a just society. We have heard a number of colleagues tonight say let us not talk about Russia versus EU investment and the divide between those who speak Russian and those who speak Ukrainian. It is incumbent upon us to help the Ukrainians to bring all of those divisions together again, and the hope for a united country.

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I was going to share some of the terms they have imposed on the cabinet, but I am running out of time. Perhaps in a question I could do that. It is absolutely incumbent on our government, and it has shown that it is recognizing Ukraine's parliament. It may be a little early. They have just established that parliament. Perhaps that will occur when the government delegation is there, or perhaps when they return. Rather than just sending the political delegation, Canada should also be gearing up toward sending a delegation of experts: financial experts, anti-corruption experts, democratic reform experts, and experts in setting up judicial processes. This will be a long-term engagement.

In closing, I would simply say: *Slava Ukraini*

• (2130)

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Chair, I would agree with my colleague across the aisle, that for those who think it is a divided nation wanting to turn its back on Russia, it is just not so.

From a trade perspective, when I was in the Euromaidan, I spoke on stage there. Part of my speech to the group there was that we stand with them for freedom and economic and civil trade engagements, not just with the east, not just with the west, but with the world, as truly a nation of the world.

Newspapers have been writing that somehow this was a decision of whether to trade with Russia or trade with the rest of the world. It was not. One-third of Ukraine's trade now is with Russia. Another third of its trade is with Europe, and the other third is with the world. Ukraine plainly wants to maintain that. The arrangement with Russia would have stopped the other two-thirds from happening, by having an emphasis on open borders with Russia and more exclusivity in trading with Russia.

Ukraine does not want to turn its back on Russia. Ukraine has a long history with Russia, but Ukrainians want to have the opportunity to trade with the world as they wish.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, I will share what a young Ukrainian returning to Kiev has been quoted as saying. "This is not about getting into the EU. This is about justice. And justice is something that this country hasn't seen in a long, long while".

As I mentioned, to their credit, the new people who are in the process of forming the government have set a number of conditions: no previous member of the presidential administration; long-term experience working with specific sectors; managerial experience; and a complete lack of involvement in human rights abuses and corrupt deals.

Congratulations to the people of Ukraine, trying to put together a proper government.

Ms. Chrystia Freeland (Toronto Centre, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I will start by assuring the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona that we in the Ukrainian community have a saying that everyone is Ukrainian, but they just may not know it yet; so there is still a chance for the hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

I was very interested in the hon. member's comments about creating democratic institutions and creating institutions with civil servants who are able to enforce the rule of law rather than break it.

I wonder whether the hon. member could comment on what specifically Canada can do to help Ukraine in building up its civic institutions, which are clearly one of the things missing in Ukraine, one of the reasons it has come to this real crisis situation.

• (2135)

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, I know the hon. member has had considerable experience working overseas, as have I. We have the experience in providing this expertise, as have many other nations around the world.

For example, we have sent judges overseas to train judges in how to properly judge and set up the system. I myself have trained judges, prosecutors, and investigators in several countries around the world. An important part of that program is not just for us to go over and tell them that this is the way we do it, but to bring them to Canada as well.

One of the things that was identified strongly in the mission to Ukraine we had a year and a half ago was the desperate need at the local level in the civic administration, where they have very little experience in actually running government, including engaging citizens, and very little recognition and understanding of NGOs and how to bring people into the council chamber. It is very important to take civic officials over, to bring over members from the judiciary, but it is also important for us to export people who could teach how to set up audit systems and how to deal with corruption.

Ms. Olivia Chow (Trinity—Spadina, NDP): Mr. Chair, while we mourn the 100 heroes who lost their lives fighting for independence, freedom, and democracy, their spirit will continue to guide us here and in the future and inspire us to assist the people of Ukraine to seek real economic independence, true freedom, and human rights.

While Canada has taken a first step in sending a delegation to Ukraine, we must also assist in the country's economic development, assist in its democratic reform, and help its people root out corruption.

Could my colleague elaborate in some detail on how Canada can contribute to Ukraine's economic and democratic development?

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, I would never pretend that I personally have all the answers for Ukraine. Heaven knows, we are still working on good governance in Canada and, hopefully, all working together in that direction.

I can provide my colleague with a couple of examples, and it would be well worth those who are responsible for foreign affairs and CIDA and so forth looking into this.

While I was working in Bangladesh on a CIDA project, the Government of Canada came out with a program on instituting anti-corruption measures that worked within the Bangladesh government. Bangladesh has been well known for some time as being very high on the list of corrupt regimes, and some headway was made.

We have a lot of expertise within our own administration. We should sit down and do the hard work required, and start talking to our own administration about our experience in other countries, to identify the most cost-effective way to do that.

Government Orders

I understand that the Americans are also headed to Ukraine right now, and so are the Europeans. It is important for Canada to show leadership. It was done in Indonesia when we had too many donors competing with each other. Canada showed leadership through CIDA called a meeting, and continued to hold meetings, to coordinate the donors so that every dollar was used in an efficient and expeditious way without the overlap.

Canada has an opportunity to show leadership here. That is one way that we could contribute to the development of the rule of law and democracy in Ukraine.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Chair, in light of my friend from Strathcona's comments about what Canada could do to show leadership, and given that the United States is now stepping up and saying, as we also hope, that Ukraine can find its way to an acceptable democratic government, does the official opposition think we should join the U.S.?

Secretary of State John Kerry has offered a \$1-billion guarantee to help the Ukrainian economy become stable during this time of political crisis. What view would my colleague take of Canadian financial contributions being made?

• (2140)

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, I cannot speak to the actual amount.

In the House today, concerns were raised about Venezuela. I have had people contact me to say that we are talking about Ukraine, but what about Thailand? It is important that the government be serious about that and think about what we can commit.

The member asked a valid question; we need to put our money where our mouth is. Time is of the essence in Ukraine. If the country tries to hold its government together, it is going to need a major infusion of dollars to get to the next tranche before it can negotiate with IMF or someone else.

We could perhaps also provide guidance to the IMF to not to go too hard on them. Most Ukrainians are living in dire poverty already and could not take much more economic hardship.

It is incumbent upon us to commit a lot more money. We will wait to hear more when the government returns. It would have been nice if representatives of the other parties could be there and we could all come back convivially, to say that having heard them personally we should go for it. There could perhaps be a delegation returning very soon, maybe during the election monitoring.

Mr. Wladyslaw Lizon (Mississauga East—Cooksville, CPC): Mr. Chair, I see the opinion that it is the European Union on one side and Russia on the other. On one side we see the European Union that is democratic, inclusive, a group of countries that decided to work together, and on the other side we see Russia, which is not democratic, that wants to rule over others, and the future looks bleak.

The government that was formed today, the government of national unity, has to be approved by parliament tomorrow. It has a very hard task in front of it. One of the tasks is to bring people together, to make sure there is no talk about division in Ukraine. The government has to make sure that all Ukrainians feel included, not excluded, from the whole system. I would like to ask the hon. member for her comments on that.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Chair, the hon. member is making a very good point. However, the important thing will not be what Canada or other external countries can do, but what we can do to support Ukraine to become strong, so that Ukrainians on their own can combat against anybody who might try to divide the country.

Obviously, they are in a lot of turmoil right now. In viewing the coverage, there are volunteer police on the streets with the police officers. Who knows how long the police will have patience for that. There will be many families with deep grief, who will be seeking revenge and so forth. We do not know what is going on in Crimea.

The best we can do is to say we are there for Ukraine to keep the country together and to ask what we can do to assist. Let us hope that we do not go to the extent where we have to think about sending in armaments, which has happened in the past in some cases.

Time is of the essence. There have been too many times in history where people have said that we should have gone in sooner. Let us not make that mistake this time.

Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Chair, I was going to say it is my pleasure to stand to talk about this, but in light of everything, it would be an inappropriate comment. Tonight, as I was listening to all the speeches, I was thinking about the Orange Revolution. I was in Ukraine during the Orange Revolution with my colleague. I was thinking back to walking down the streets of Kiev and seeing all the orange tents. There was orange all over the place. There were very patriotic Ukrainians who wanted a democratic country, the right to vote the way they wanted to vote, all the things we enjoy in our great nation of Canada. I remembered sitting in one of the tents with six young people talking to me about their dreams for Ukraine.

It was with great sadness that I learned of the problems under the rule of Yanukovich, of having democracy in Ukraine being turned all around. I give my very sincere condolences for those who have lost their lives in Ukraine and to the families who have had to deal with great violence in the face of their own patriotism for their country.

When I was in the countryside of Ukraine, I saw beautiful farm families. They made the best borscht in the world, I have to say. It was great. Along with that was the people's very warm and open hearts about their country.

Before I go any further, I should inform you that I will be sharing my time with the member for Mississauga—Erindale.

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We can share our time and express our hopes and dreams for Ukraine. We have 1.3 million Ukrainian Canadians in our country, whose hearts are in our country as well as in Ukraine, and whose hearts are breaking. In my own family, my brother-in-law is Ukrainian. There are many memories for Ukrainian Canadians of what it was like in Ukraine and coming to Canada. We are sister countries in many respects. The Ukrainian people who immigrated to Canada have helped build our great nation and contributed greatly. Yet, today, in my riding of Kildonan—St. Paul, I see Ukrainian Canadians flocking to their churches and community centres to raise money to help their sisters and brothers, cousins, aunt and uncles, in Ukraine, to ensure they have some resources to get through this very troublesome time.

As usual, Canada always rises to the top, in aid and caring about what happens in Ukraine and to the citizens of Ukraine. In Canada, we have not had the experience of having to fight for democracy on our streets. This is a very privileged country. We have democracy. We have the right to walk where we want to walk, to vote the way we want to vote, to speak of what we want to speak.

I visited Ukraine during the Orange Revolution, and I have visited since then, and it is a very different kind of feeling on the streets. Freedom is not only within the rules, regulations, and law of the country, it is also within the heart of the country and its citizens. Tonight, all of us on all sides of the House are thinking about what we, as Canadians, not only Ukrainian Canadians but others, can do to help our sister country get through this troubled time.

● (2145)

I have a lot of confidence in the people of Ukraine. I know they know the solutions that they will need in their country and I know that they will carry them through. They have demonstrated it with their blood and with their voices in the streets of Ukraine.

● (2150)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Chair, I appreciate the comments from my colleague just across the boundary line from myself, as I am sure she is as aware as I am that there has been a great deal of interest within the community in Winnipeg. We have had everything from rallies at the Manitoba legislature to special events in some of the community churches. There is a great deal of interest in what is taking place in Ukraine, and it goes even further than individuals of Ukrainian heritage.

One concern they have, and I made reference to this point earlier, is how important it is that we do what we can here in the House of Commons. One thing we can do is to make a firm commitment that we are going to send observers. That is important.

I would like the member to comment on the need to look at ways we can assist Ukraine economically, because the economics of Ukraine are going to be very important in the years ahead. Maybe she might want to comment on that aspect of building a relationship between what I would classify as two great nations.

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Chair, I have always known the member from Winnipeg North to be a very caring person and very in tune with nations that are having these kinds of problems, especially Ukraine because, as the member said, in Winnipeg we have a great deal of Ukrainian Canadians who have settled in Winnipeg and made it their home.

I think, as was said earlier by one of the colleagues on this side of the House, we first of all need to take our direction from Ukraine. We will be the support. We will be the help.

In the past, Canada has had a tradition of going to monitor elections. We have had a tradition in this country of helping out when help was needed, whether it was monetary help, help during elections, or support systems and advice when support systems and advice were needed.

As the days unfold in the very near future, what we need to do for the country of Ukraine will become apparent. Right now, we have a delegation on its way over to that country. I think we will always continue to be there for Ukraine.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Chair, I would like to thank the hon. member for participating in this very important discussion at this late hour. I will not say “debate”, because I think we are in agreement here.

The hon. member has been very active in Edmonton in an activity I have also been engaged in: combatting trafficking of girls and women. Before Christmas I attended a session sponsored by a group in Edmonton, the Maple Leaf group, at which an author spoke about the depth of the problem with the trafficking of Ukrainian girls and women.

I think it is important to keep in perspective that judicial reform and democratic reform have many components and that there are many in our non-governmental sector, in addition to the government sector, who may well be able to provide assistance. It is my experience in working internationally that it is often much better for the federal government to provide money to non-governmental organizations, which in turn can work with the NGOs in that other country.

I wonder if she would speak to that point. Those are the kinds of initiatives through which Canada could actually do good work with a smaller amount of money.

With the decline of the judicial process and the rule of law in Ukraine, many are falling through the cracks, and they include the girls and women being trafficked both into Ukraine from other nations as well as out of Ukraine to Canada and other countries.

Does the member agree that there may be innovative ways that Canada could provide assistance in a very economical way?

Mrs. Joy Smith: Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague from Edmonton—Strathcona for bringing up that topic. In years past, I did quite a bit of work in Ukraine on this issue with Abina Dann, the former Canadian ambassador to Ukraine.

In terms of the financial aspect of it, that always comes into play in situations like this. As I have said, as the days unfold, Ukraine will give us better direction on how it wants other countries to support it and infuse whatever is needed to help it come to a democracy where people can be free, where they can build their businesses, and where they can grow.

In terms of the actual dollars and things like that, we will soon know what we are able to do and what Ukraine wants us to do as the days and months unfold.

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• (2155)

Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC): Mr. Chair, when we last met in debate on this subject on January 27, I do not believe any of us could have imagined the events that would transpire over the ensuing weeks. I can only describe them as stunning in their ferocity and violence and in the swift outcome of recent days, with the fall of the Yanukovich regime and its replacement with a new transitional government.

I would also like to join with my colleague from Edmonton East in expressing sympathy and condolences to all the victims of violence in the protests on the Maidan and elsewhere in Ukraine. Our thoughts and prayers are with the families and friends of those killed in those protests.

We all stand united here in support of the courageous peaceful protestors who stood up for democracy and are continuing to do so in Ukraine. We call on the relevant authorities to bring all those responsible for violence and death to justice as soon as possible. We support the Ukrainian people in their ongoing quest for democracy and human rights, including press freedom, and we were pleased to see the release of Yulia Tymoshenko and all political prisoners.

We look forward to new presidential elections now that Yanukovich and his government have been deposed, and we call on all nations, including all the neighbours of Ukraine, Russia included, to respect the borders of Ukraine and the self-determination of the Ukrainian people. We also call on President Putin to recognize the new transitional Ukrainian government. I would also like to suggest that we support the IMF and the international community in their efforts to assist Ukraine in stabilizing the Ukrainian economy. Members will know that Canada is a major contributor to the IMF.

Canada should and will support Ukrainian democracy by sending a large election observation mission to the new presidential election in May, and I am quite confident that we will get good advice from both CANADEM and the Ukrainian Canadian Congress on how that mission should be structured. The Ukrainian people must be allowed to choose their own economic and democratic future, and all nations, including Russia, must respect the democratic choices of the Ukrainian people.

Canada welcomes the presidential transition in Ukraine. We stand ready to support the efforts toward a stable, democratic, and united Ukraine. As Ukraine enters a phase of de-escalation and the transition faces many challenges and difficult times ahead, the situation remains extremely fragile.

In December 2012, I had the honour of attending the OSCE meeting in Dublin and learning about the OSCE and what it can do in supporting democracy and media freedom and other human rights throughout this region. Through its multidimensional approach to security that includes politico-military, economic, environmental, and human rights, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, or OSCE as it is commonly referred to, is one tool that can be used to assist Ukraine. This organization, which includes all the players involved in brokering the February 21 agreement, including France, Poland, Germany, and the Russian Federation as well as Ukraine, has invaluable experience in helping participating states

successfully overcome political turmoil by building transparency and confidence.

Throughout the crisis, Canada's mission to the OSCE in Vienna delivered statements every week, calling on all sides to refrain from violence and to resolve the crisis through dialogue and political means and respect for human rights. Canada's ambassador to the OSCE also expressed support for the OSCE's involvement in defusing the situation and continuously encouraged the then Ukrainian government to accept the Swiss OSCE chair's offer of assistance. I would like to bring to the attention of all of my colleagues the role the OSCE can and should play in the stabilization of Ukraine over the next few weeks and months.

Having said that, I would like to say for all of my friends in Ukraine and the Ukrainian Canadian community here in Canada, *Slava Ukraini. Slava Canada.*

• (2200)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Chair, I would like to wholeheartedly thank my colleague for his speech. I had the opportunity to travel with him to Ukraine just over two years ago in order to take stock of the state of human rights and democracy in that country, which should have access to much greater democracy.

According to members of civil society and people we met, there had been a major setback despite significant efforts and progress made in the mid-2000s.

I would like the member to talk about the situation in the past two years, since our trip, including the events that unfolded very quickly over the past few weeks.

Does he think that the damage caused by the Yanukovich regime to civil society and the Ukrainian people is irreversible, or is there still hope for Ukrainian society?

[*English*]

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Chair, the member and I had the opportunity, as she pointed out, to travel to Ukraine with the parliamentary foreign affairs committee in May 2012.

Although we could not have predicted exactly how things would play out in Ukraine, I think we saw the seeds of what has happened in the last few months, while we were there. We saw the deterioration of rule of law. We saw the deterioration of press freedom. We saw manipulations with the democratic process. All of those things built pressure to bring down the Yanukovich government and bring the results we have seen in the last few days.

The member mentioned other organizations. We took the time while we were there to go to Kharkiv in the east and Lviv in the west. We met with members of civil society, non-governmental organizations. There are a number of those that Canada supports through the international development agency.

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When I was parliamentary secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, I had occasion to meet with a number of them. I was very encouraged to see that those same NGOs that were providing support for democracy in the parliamentary elections last year were also on the Maidan participating in a protest. Many of them are still there today, and some of them are actually even becoming members of the new transition government.

Canada has played a big role in supporting the development of democracy in Ukraine, and it will be able to continue to do so. I hope it will continue to do so in the future.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Chair, our Ukrainian Canadian Congress has done a phenomenal job of just ensuring that Canadians as a whole are very much informed and kept aware of the things that have been occurring in Ukraine over the last number of months.

That particular organization and the provincial organizations should be applauded for their actions and the amount of information they have been able to share with a much wider part of our population.

In fact, it circulated a petition. I just want to make reference to the third point on the petition, where it is suggesting:

work with like-minded countries to impose 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.

The whole idea of sanctions is something we talked about a lot. I am wondering if the member would like to provide some comment in terms of what the Government of Canada is doing today in regard to sanctions.

• (2205)

Mr. Bob Dechert: Mr. Chair, just briefly, the idea of sanctions is something that is definitely worth considering.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs has indicated that all those options are on the table. The purpose of the sanctions that were suggested by the government about a week ago was to put pressure on the Yanukovich government to release political prisoners and to stop using violence against peaceful protestors in the Maidan.

The government has changed now, so I think what we have to do now is work with our international allies and partners to bring about a coordinated effort using the appropriate kinds of sanctions against the appropriate individuals to support Ukraine's transition to a new government and to a new, democratic, and brighter economic future.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Chair, Ukraine means a lot to me. I wish I could explain why I feel so attached to this country, but it is hard. I suppose many can relate. Sometimes you become attached to people in foreign lands through travels or cultural discoveries. You find a place where you feel good. All of a sudden, you understand the people. You tell yourself, "I am going to come back here." It is a question of natural predilection.

That is what I experienced with Ukraine. When I was there, in Crimea, for the very first time, I had no idea that I just happened to open the door to a whole new cultural and emotional experience.

That was in 2006, two years after the Orange Revolution. I was coming from Russia. I was able to see first-hand the difference between those two countries, because, despite the many political highs and lows in Ukraine, Ukrainian society was still openly capitalizing on the steps it had taken toward freedom two years earlier. The energy released by the Orange Revolution was almost as strong as that from the 1990 declaration of independence. The country was rising enthusiastically in its own image, according to its own will and in total freedom. Even though the material and economic conditions were not the best, Ukraine, with the Baltic states, represented at the time the best hope of leaving the post-Soviet misery behind once and for all.

Then, in February 2010, everything shifted. Yanukovich's victory in the presidential election was not a good sign. I will go over the events of the past three years, which have been a slow and grotesque nightmare from which we have just woken up.

In the days following the victory of the Party of Regions, western democracies were stunned. The election results were clear. The election was fairly clean. We had to recognize that the Ukrainian people had expressed their democratic will. The United States accepted the election results, as did Europe.

The attitude taken by western democracies ranged from pragmatism born of necessity to the most absurd denial. There had been many electoral irregularities, incidents of intimidation, shell games, in short, the usual scheming, but we did not want to get too involved. The message was that the time for revolution had passed.

As for Yanukovich, we put up with him, as we would a monkey that we think we can eventually train. After all, we are now free to say out loud what we were whispering at the time. I would like to remind members that when Yanukovich was elected, everyone suspected that he was behind the attempted poisoning of Viktor Yushchenko. It was neither a legend nor hearsay. All the literature from that time confirms it. Basically, it was no secret.

Disgrace was inevitable in his case. Now, there is an international warrant for his arrest. I do not know how long he will be able to hide.

Let me get back to 2010. At first, Europe felt that it had built strong enough ties with Ukraine to gently guide Yanukovich's administration in the right direction. While I am sure that European diplomats did not have high hopes, they likely thought Europe could play a positive role in Ukraine, if only by setting an example.

What was the response on the ground? Reactions were mixed. Ukrainians had seen just about everything in their 500-year history, and this was not the first time they had been disappointed. The public believed that the fact that opinions in the country were sharply divided would be enough to keep the government nervous, even if the opposition was weakened by internal power struggles.

On February 22, 2010, Tymoshenko, then a defeated candidate, did not mince words when she said that the oligarchy needs cheap labour and poor and disenfranchised people who can be forced to work at their factories for peanuts. They also need Ukraine's riches, which they had been stealing for the last 18 years.

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It turns out that her words perfectly summarize Yanukovich's four-year reign. His refusal to sign the agreement with the European Union last fall was simply a logical consequence of this systematic plan to bring Ukraine to its knees. Tymoshenko's warning was materializing.

Things were quickly going to get worse as far as she was concerned. Her unlawful conviction in August 2011 after a long, rigged trial confirmed the worst. Yanukovich was seeking revenge and he was prepared to blatantly and shamelessly bend the rules to stay in power. The international community unequivocally condemned this trial.

Canada also did not waste any time. In the fall of 2011, this Parliament decided to warn the Ukrainian government that it would not tolerate such serious affronts to the rule of law and human rights.

In May 2012, a parliamentary delegation, which included myself and several of my colleagues who are here tonight, went to Ukraine to get a first-hand look at what was happening.

• (2210)

Our embassy in Kiev made it easier to communicate with over 50 stakeholders from various political and civil circles. For a week, we were able to listen to enlightening testimony.

We came to the astounding realization that, despite the well-developed networks of civil actors and the united message they were sending, the country seemed to have returned to the uncertain days of the post-Soviet transition. Insecurity, corruption and worthless legal processes were weakening the state and society.

I was able to see the difference given my familiarity with the country. The winds of freedom that were blowing in 2006 had died. Conversations with friends were heavy and sad. Ukrainians were seeing all the efforts they had made since 2004 being undermined by the regime. A dark curtain just been drawn over their future. Do hon. members understand what such a crisis meant for a people who had already experienced so many setbacks?

In frustration, Ukrainians put on their old, well-worn blinders just so they would have the strength to continue to live in this country that history refused to liberate.

However, history teaches a lesson that no one can deny. The Ukrainian spirit is strong and always resurges. I told myself this repeatedly, saying that, in this end, this extraordinary people, these Cossacks, would react.

In November 2013, the Yanukovich administration refused to sign the agreement to join the European Union that had been in progress for years. In one fell swoop, it was as if the country's heart had been ripped out.

People spontaneously took to the street, assembling at Independence Square, as they did in 2004, to demand government accountability. Yanukovich's selfish and indefensible decision to favour the exclusive customs union with Russia shocked Ukrainians deeply. Their only door to a better future had been shut, forcing them to accept an uncertain role in an area under Moscow's control with predictable consequences.

If the question is whether the Russian government is involved in everything that has happened, the answer is yes, of course. As are Europe and the United States. We need to stop being surprised that the Russian government is doing everything it can to keep a grip on the former Soviet republics. Who can they turn to? What we can see is that it is not working.

Let me paint a quick picture. Kazakhstan and its wealth turn to China, its neighbour. Georgia, through Turkey, went to the West. Azerbaijan conducts its own small and very lucrative business and is as happy as a clam. Ukraine turns to Europe. At the end of the day, there is not much left for them, except Lukashenko.

I followed the incredible series of events last week very closely. If someone had told me last Wednesday that I had to speak to the situation, I would not have had the words to express my utter dismay. Things seemed so irreparable that I was starting to lose hope.

On Thursday, when I found out that snipers had indiscriminately shot peaceful protesters, my worst fears were realized. However, the Cossack spirit prevailed and everything turned around in matter of 24 hours. The revolution that seemed impossible had become a reality.

On the weekend, I could not take my eyes off the news, as Yanukovich's support collapsed and the Verkhovna Rada deposed the president. Seeing Yulia Tymoshenko in a wheelchair in Independence Square, in front of a huge, but silent crowd who were listening to her impassioned speech, was indescribable.

I am immensely proud to be here today to express how I feel about this. I want to reiterate my deep affection for Ukraine and its people. I want to send my deepest condolences to the families of the victims, killed because they believed in freedom for Ukraine. To them I say:

[Member spoke in Ukrainian as follows:]

Slava heroyam!

[Translation]

I am calling on the Government of Canada to follow the example of the European Union and the United States, support the new transitional government and reaffirm its unwavering support for Ukraine and its democratic aspirations.

[Member spoke in Ukrainian and provided the following translation:]

Together we will prevail! Glory to Ukraine!

• (2215)

[English]

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Chair, I appreciated hearing the member speak about the spirit and the people of Ukraine, and the fact that they were prepared to put themselves in harm's way, where death and bodily injury ensued.

What would the member say was the underlying point or principle that caused a nation or a group of people to be prepared to go to that degree to ensure that a certain set of events would take place?

Government Orders

[Translation]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: Mr. Chair, that is an excellent question to which there is no quick or easy answer. I think that the Ukrainian people were ready for what happened. That is exactly what they had been seeking for a long time. The Yanukovich regime forced them to endure so much, and the point of no return was his refusal to sign the agreement with the European Union.

For many Ukrainians, that was the straw that broke the camel's back. They could not accept it. They said enough was enough, they were going to occupy the square and they did not want that kind of thing any more. They wanted a truly democratic and free Ukraine. We must use every available resource to support the movement and help Ukraine continue its progress toward democracy and freedom.

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Chair, like the member, and I am sure a number of members of Parliament, we have had the good fortune to experience Ukraine first-hand, in Independence Square and in other communities. It gives us a bit of a different perspective. When we think of the barricades and so forth, we are familiar with Independence Square and how confined it actually is.

In terms of economics, would the member like to share some thoughts on the important role Canada could play in sitting down with the future leadership of Ukraine and discussing how we might be able to assist Ukraine economically? Some would suggest looking at ways we might be able to take down some barriers that would assist us in accommodating, for example, additional trade and things of that nature. Does she have some thoughts on that particular issue?

[Translation]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: Mr. Chair, I thank my hon. colleague from Winnipeg North for the question. I know that he is very interested in the problems in Ukraine and that he really cares about these issues.

As for that country's economy, clearly, a more democratic Ukraine will naturally have a healthier economy. There was a great deal of corruption; it was a huge problem. That was one of the things we saw first-hand when we were there with the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development. The democratization process will help considerably.

The program to support small businesses in Ukraine that CIDA considered is a very practical form of aid that could work and that Canada could put in place. I do not know exactly where that project is at, but I do not believe it has been implemented yet. It has been discussed for quite some time. That would be an excellent way to support small businesses directly. We know that small businesses are often less corrupt. If we can help the Ukrainian people start up small businesses, this could only benefit Ukraine and its economy.

• (2220)

[English]

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague for her heartfelt and obviously very well-informed speech. She has been following the issues in this part of the world around Ukraine, Georgia, and Azerbaijan for quite some time and has travelled through there.

I wonder if she would comment on how different these kinds of tragedies are now, in the age of social media. Many in my own office and many across Canada were following not just day by day but hour by hour as things progressed in the Maidan.

It appears that it will be important that we, as members of this assembly, and the government not only reach out to the people of Ukraine but that we perhaps also use our social media resources and contacts with our previous Ukrainian interns and any contacts we have in Ukraine to let them know that the people of Canada are watching and are here for them. Simply communicating will probably be invaluable.

[Translation]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: Mr. Chair, I sincerely thank my colleague from Edmonton—Strathcona for her comments.

With the type of revolution we have seen in Ukraine, it is obvious that revolutions have changed forever because of the advent of social media. In fact, there is far more access to information now.

My colleague was saying that the events on the weekend were reported hour by hour, even minute by minute or second by second. I was able to watch live what was happening in Independence Square, the speeches that were given and the excitement.

It is extremely important to communicate with them, to show them that they are not alone and that they have the unwavering support of a country like Canada.

As we are talking about social media, which makes me think of my generation, I would like to talk about something I have mentioned several times this evening and in the past. One of our priorities should be to make it easier for Ukrainians to obtain student visas. In fact, bringing young people to Canada is one of the best possible ways to ensure that democracy will grow in Ukraine.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague, the hon. member for Louis-Saint-Laurent, for her very clear, emotional, honest and very upright speech, as always.

I will add just one question. In Canada, we have a democracy that is very dear to us. Democracy is sometimes a rather delicate thing for Canadians, but it is more stable than it is for our friends, brothers and sisters in Ukraine.

What does she think we, as Canadians, can do to clearly show our solidarity with their efforts and their cause for democracy and peace?

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: Mr. Chair, I thank my colleague, the leader of the Green Party and member for Saanich—Gulf Islands, for her question. She touched on a very important point, which is what Canadians can do.

Something that has been brought up frequently tonight is that there is a large number of people in this country of Ukrainian descent. Every time I visited Ukraine I could see that Ukrainians were aware of that. When you tell them that you are Canadian, it is special, because almost all Ukrainians have an uncle or aunt or another family member who lives in Canada. Many Ukrainians have very strong ties to Canada.

Government Orders

Earlier I heard members talking about social media. What we can do is very simple. We can send them messages of support, to show them that Canadians are behind them. That will give them hope and the strength to continue in their fight for democracy and freedom.

• (2225)

[*English*]

Mr. Ed Komarnicki (Souris—Moose Mountain, CPC): Mr. Chair, it is a privilege to speak tonight about the events occurring in Ukraine. I would first like to offer condolences to those who have lost family members at this very trying time, those who paid the ultimate price to stand for what they believe in. Many were injured. Some were kidnapped and badly beaten. Many were abused. Many were put in jail and incarcerated for doing what one would anticipate they would be legally entitled to do, which was have the freedom to associate and to express themselves in light of a government, a regime, and a president who had taken some fairly significant steps to take them away from what they hoped would be a free and democratic Ukraine. Their hopes rested in part on an association with the European Union. Their hopes rested on the fact that they would be encouraged by that association to continue with their fledgling democracy and to continue with improvements to their judiciary. They saw that slipping away, and they took to the streets to ensure that this did not mean an end to what they had tasted.

With social media and the Internet, we are able to see the events that are transpiring there live. It is an encouragement to Ukrainians to know that they are not alone, that there are people and countries who stand with them. Equally important is that with social media, they appreciate what democracies experience from time to time. Having partaken themselves in that, they were not prepared to give it up.

I recall, in my first year here, in 2004, as a young parliamentarian, when the Orange Revolution was taking place. I came to the House near midnight and spoke to encourage the Ukrainian people at that point, because it seemed that there was an opportunity for them to strive for democracy and freedom of association. That hope did not blossom as we thought it might. Those dreams and aspirations were lost for a variety of reasons, perhaps because the opportunity given to those in leadership was not taken advantage of or not proceeded with. As a consequence, we saw a reversion of what they had experienced and thought they were well on their way to accomplishing.

I should mention that I will be splitting my time with the member for Pickering—Scarborough East. I want to be sure that is on the record.

It was with that hope and determination that people thought they were going forward. Then they saw it dashed, particularly when the Yanukovich regime eliminated Yulia Tymoshenko as a potential political rival by incarcerating her and preventing her from running in the election. At that point, we could see that the country was proceeding in the wrong direction and that it needed correction.

Just a few days ago, who would have thought that events would so unfold that we would see her released? One of the fundamental rights of a democracy is a judiciary that is independent and not manipulated, where someone can expect to be under the rule of law, come before a judicial system, and have it provide a judicial

pronouncement without interference or manipulation. That was a fundamental part of it. To see her released through the efforts of the people and the stand they took in Maidan was remarkable.

• (2230)

To see that there will be elections on May 26 and there will be nominations by March, is incredible. It is breathtaking. As a country, we must support Ukraine, not only in ensuring that those elections are free and democratic, we must also help them with their economic circumstances and the fundamentals they need to succeed at this time. There are a lot of challenges and there will be a lot of struggles. I know their territorial integrity is important. We must ensure that those are maintained and that we are there to stand with them in the difficult future, just as we have to this point. It is going to be very important for that fledgling democracy to take root. We need to do everything we can to see that happen.

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC): Mr. Chair, the difficulties that Ukraine has been going through sourcing its fuel and its gas supplies was mentioned earlier. The challenge was to turn away from the sources supplied to Russia to being supplied, or helped out, by the European Union. Earlier today, at committee meeting, there was a discussion on this and it evolved around the knowledge that Ukraine has huge resources of shale gas and other gas supplies that have not been developed. I felt that Russia holding Ukraine up for that trade contract over gas was repulsive.

This resource that is in the ground is being numbered into the multi-multi-billions. Does my colleague think perhaps that resource could be mortgaged, or bridge financed, to give Ukraine the short-term financial assistance it needs? This would not be just a gift to Ukraine, but an actual investment by some of the western countries that know how to put these financial packages together. With some \$15 billion in resources sitting under the feet of Ukrainians, it would do well to have \$10 billion of that released by some form of mortgaging by international companies that could co-operate on it.

What does the member think?

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Chair, there is a lot in there. However, there is no doubt Ukraine has a lot of resources, not only in shale gas but also in very valuable land. It also has the human resources that need to be harnessed. Certainly, if it could have the rule of law operating as it should and basic economic principles and understanding, I believe there would be people who would invest in Ukraine's future. Indeed, as governments around the world invest in Ukraine to ensure it can develop, if it can develop, it can be self-sustaining. Ukraine has a great opportunity and it has the resources to make it happen.

While there is trepidation and great difficulty and struggle, there is also great hope for Ukraine. The western countries must not abandon Ukraine in its hour of need. They must be there for Ukraine. That includes business, which I think is able to invest mightily.

Government Orders

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Chair, would the member provide some comment on the whole idea of sanctions? It is something that has been talked about, whether here in the House of Commons, or in my case, in the community that I serve, Winnipeg North. There is a group of individuals who have perpetrated a great deal of harm to Ukraine and its people. Having targeted and ongoing sanctions would hopefully have a bit of an impact, or at least demonstrate strong leadership from Canada, in recognizing the great harm that the former president and the group around him have caused.

What is the government doing on the issue of sanctions today?

● (2235)

Mr. Ed Komarnicki: Mr. Chair, I think the government has taken significant steps to date, but with the change and transition in government I think it needs to reassess and work with its allies. Certainly I know there is a desire to take steps to punish, to sanction, or to seek a certain amount of revenge on those who have done harm, but if there were a caution I would put to those in the government in transition, it is not to become subject to the same difficulties the regime found itself in. They must be sure to proceed within the rule of law, within an impartial judiciary. They need to make laws in accordance with the constitution. They need to proceed in accordance with what is right and develop along that track.

Yes, there needs to be a singular, narrow focus on dealing with those, and maybe one or two or more, individuals who have caused the deaths of unarmed people who were no threat. They need to be punished in the course of time. But at the moment, as we speak, that is not the most important issue for Ukraine. The most important issue is to ensure that the territory is integrated, that the people can indeed function as a democracy, that they get a government in place and start putting the building blocks in place for a free and democratic society as we know it in the western world.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu (Pickering—Scarborough East, CPC): Mr. Chair, I wish to add my voice to those who have expressed their deep concern about recent developments in Ukraine. I also wish to express my deep sorrow for the loss of lives and for the people who made the ultimate sacrifice for freedom and democracy in Ukraine.

My concern is compounded by the current economic situation in that country, a situation that was aggravated by former president Yanukovich's shunning of the European Union and the west and his disregard of the collective will of the country's citizens.

The government and the people of Canada are determined to assist to the greatest extent possible in the development of Ukraine's economy. This is for the betterment of Ukrainians' standard of living, the diversification of economic choice for its consumers, and the entrenchment of those freedoms that are derived from a rules-based economic system, absent the constraints of corruption and inadequate governance.

The current economic climate in Ukraine is very troubled. In its most recent report, the World Bank forecast 0% growth for Ukraine in 2013, citing a weak global environment and delays in domestic policy adjustments, which it notes has led to widening and unsustainable macroeconomic imbalances.

The bank cited high fiscal debt levels and the need to adopt a flexible exchange rate policy as much-needed reforms. It also cited the need to address structural adjustments, including the imbalance between what Ukraine pays and charges for its gas and heating.

The IMF has characterized Ukraine as off track. Ukraine faces worsening liquidity conditions, a structurally weak banking sector, and difficult access to long-term funding for business.

The Ukrainian government's privatization program has also generated concern, as many believe it will ultimately serve to benefit Ukraine's oligarchs. This outrage over the level of corruption and graft in Ukraine is part of the reason people are out on the streets.

An association agreement and deep and comprehensive free trade area with the EU could, in spite of the possibility of some short-term economic shocks, put Ukraine on the path to economic stability and prosperity. However, the Yanukovich government rejected that opportunity and fell back on old habits, choosing to rely instead on an outdated economic model backed by unreliable partners.

Canada has always striven for a positive and mutually beneficial trading relationship with Ukraine, with private sector organizations such as the Canada-Ukraine Chamber of Commerce playing a key role in expanding the business-to-business commercial relationship.

In 2013, bilateral trade increased by nearly 3%, reaching more than \$322 million. Canada's merchandise exports totalled approximately \$210 million, about 40% more than in 2012. Canada's imports from Ukraine totalled about \$112 million in 2013, about 32% less than in 2012.

In view of political developments in Ukraine, the EDC has recently changed its country position from highly restricted to currently under review.

Despite Ukraine's challenging foreign investment climate, Canadian companies are seeking investments in the country's strategic sectors: agriculture, energy and mining, and niche opportunities in clean technology and renewable energy.

However, these companies need predictability and transparency to make effective business decisions, and that is why Canada is supportive of reforms in Ukraine that aim to reduce corruption and improve competitiveness and investor protection.

We are hopeful that the change in government in Ukraine will spur on much-needed economic reform and will represent a turning point that leads to a strengthened bilateral commercial relationship.

Now is the time for the Canadian public to redouble its determination to help the people of Ukraine reach their aspirations. Our efforts must work to leverage development programming to advance the mutual trade and economic interests of Ukraine and Canada and to help Ukraine build a transparent, rules-based, globally competitive economy.

● (2240)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Chair, when afforded the opportunity, I like to express how many people in Canada are following the debate and are interested in what is happening.

Government Orders

One of the more significant things that Canada will be doing is looking at sending observers. I suspect we could send somewhere in the neighbourhood of 1,000 observers. We have talked about 500, but we have also heard 1,000 mentioned. There is no doubt that Canada does have a significant role. By sending observers, we will be able to contribute in a tangible way.

Another way we can contribute is by thinking of the years ahead and how we can help Ukraine economically. I have commented on the future of Ukraine's economy and the kind of a role Canada could play in that.

One of the things I have not focused too much attention on is the issue of institutions, such as democratic and other institutions over there. I wonder if the member might comment on how important it is that we build relations with democratic institutions. It can be as simple as having friendship groups between parliamentarians in both Canada and Ukraine.

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Mr. Chair, I thank the member for Winnipeg North for his very useful comments.

Canada is the sixth-largest donor of technical assistance to Ukraine and has invested over \$410 million in bilateral official development assistance. These are very important things, and we are continuing to offer assistance to Ukraine.

The issue at the moment, in my opinion, is the financial situation in Ukraine. The country needs immediate financial assistance. Obviously, the first group of countries that can offer this assistance is the European Union.

I just heard that the Russians froze the buying of bonds from Ukraine. Now the currency, the hryvnia, is going down.

The problem that Ukraine faces now is that of getting immediate financial assistance. I think Canada can contribute and work with its partners and allies to resolve the situation.

• (2245)

[Translation]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Chair, my colleague's remarks show that he is deeply concerned about the current and future financial and economic situation in Ukraine. I would like to ask him a question in that regard.

We know that Canada suspended sanctions and that it has not taken steps to freeze any assets that the Ukrainian officials who participated in this repression might have in Canada.

However, with all the corruption that occurred, we know that the highest authorities in the Ukrainian regime, who just disappeared, pocketed billions of dollars belonging to the Ukrainian people. If all countries would agree to freeze those assets, that money could eventually be returned to Ukraine.

What does my colleague think about that?

[English]

Mr. Corneliu Chisu: Mr. Chair, I thank the member for her question. It is a valid question.

The situation in Ukraine is confused, and we need to be cautious with our actions. We cannot just freeze all the assets. We need to

leave these issues to the development of the democratic process in Ukraine. I can say that Canada is acting very cautiously in concert with the European Union.

I was at the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe on January 30 where I delivered a speech. Canada is an observer there and was the first country to contemplate sanctions against the oligarchs. That is one step in which Canada has shown leadership.

However, we need to be cautious. We need to see how the development of the democratic process is going in Ukraine at this point. We cannot take measures that are out of context and that may precipitate a situation that is not necessarily desirable.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Chair, it is a pleasure to rise today to address what I believe is a very important issue, not only for Ukraine, but for Canada and indeed the world.

What is happening in Ukraine has had an impact around the globe. However, in Canada it is important to recognize the hundreds of thousands of people who have been following the news. That is one of the wonderful things about the Internet and the number of newscasts that take place. Throughout the world, and particularly in Canada, many people have been able to follow very closely what has been taking place in Ukraine.

We understand and appreciate the anxiety and the very real fear in Ukraine. I am not a historian, in any sense of the word, but this situation has received quite an amount of attention, even inside the House. We had an emergency debate in January. We had a take note debate last December, and we are having another take note debate this evening. The high level of interest speaks to the need for debate. People are very sympathetic about what they are seeing on the nightly news that is taking place in Ukraine.

I have had the opportunity to speak with a number of people, and there were three critical points provided to me, which I will read. In regard to the people of Ukraine and what expectations we have, my point of view is one of fundamental principle. For example, the people of Ukraine deserve the right to protest. The recent laws that were passed in January to prohibit anti-government demonstrations were anti-democratic and unacceptable.

Another point that was raised was that the people of Ukraine have made it clear that they want to be a part of Europe. The decisions that were made by the Ukrainian government in November show a blatant disregard for citizens. The people believe that they deserve a choice and opportunities for their future.

The third point is that a truly democratic society should promote freedom of responsibility, speech and expression, and people should never have to fear violence and imprisonment because they feel passionate enough to seek a peaceful rally for their opposition. We have witnessed a great deal of harm, people being beaten, tortured, and killed in far too many cases, as a result of what has been taking place in Ukraine.

We like to think that the people of Ukraine, much like the people in Canada, have a fundamental right to democracy, to freedom, and they want and desire the rule of law. These are principles that we believe are very important.

Government Orders

At the end of the day, we have witnessed widespread support across Canada. We have had rallies here on Parliament Hill. In my community of Winnipeg North, there were rallies at the Manitoba Legislature, in which I was able to participate. There were events at church organizations. I spent an afternoon at a local restaurant, where someone was showing a YouTube video to another individual about what was taking place in Ukraine. There has been so much that has been done, with expressions of interests from Canadians from all over the country.

● (2250)

What they are asking for is that the Government of Canada work in an apolitical fashion and send a very strong message to Ukraine. That is one of love and kindness, and at the same time to be firm and support the people of Ukraine. This is something that I believe is absolutely essential.

The last time we had an emergency debate was January 27, and I had the opportunity then to conclude debate. Back then I stated:

...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.

That holds true today, in the sense that we do need to do whatever we can.

Last weekend we had a wonderful convention in Montreal, and Ukraine was a very topical issue. Whether in the larger or smaller rooms, there was a great deal of discussion about what was taking place in Ukraine. More than 3,000 people from all across Canada went to the Montreal convention. It was decided to bring in an emergency resolution. I want to read for members the three critical parts, because I am limited in terms of time.

The three parts that I think bear repeating here this evening are as follows:

Be it further resolved that Canada call for an observer mission of at least 500 Canadian observers led by a pre-eminent Canadian to help oversee this election;

That was a wonderful statement, and earlier I stated that there is no reason we could not do even better than 500.

The resolution continued:

Be it further resolved that the international community take all necessary steps to ensure that any and all human rights violations in Ukraine are properly investigated and, as appropriate, prosecuted.

Be it further resolved that the Government of Canada call upon the IMF to urgently meet with the new Ukrainian leadership to provide economic support and develop a new plan

This is something that came from concerned Canadians from all across Canada who were at a convention where they felt it was important to bring forward an emergency resolution because of what we were witnessing, even over the weekend.

The members of the House have already had the opportunity in different venues to talk about it since the weekend. I know our foreign affairs critic, like other members of the House, stood in his place on Monday to express a concern, and in fact even made reference to the resolution that I just finished reciting in part. Other members were afforded opportunities. I had the opportunity to

introduce a petition, and I made reference to this in one of my questions.

The Ukrainian Canadian Congress has done a phenomenal job in working with other organizations in our provinces to ensure a high public awareness of what is taking place and in encouraging people as a whole to come together and contribute in whatever way they are able.

I realize that my time is quickly running out. I want to appeal to all members of the chamber, as I believe my leader and members of the Liberal caucus as a whole have been very clear on, that there is a need for Canada to play a very strong leadership role. We are prepared to work in an apolitical fashion. We want to be engaged and help and be a part of the solution. We support the people of Ukraine. We wish nothing but the very best in the future.

● (2255)

We see the value of providing support, whether in terms of observers, targeted sanctions, the continual economic development of Ukraine and the role Canada might be able to play in that, or institutions.

All of the above need to be acted upon. We are prepared to work in the best manner we can, in an apolitical fashion, so we can truly do what Canadians want and express our goodwill toward a great nation.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Chair, I know this is one of those issues on which we speak with one voice. Whether Conservative, New Democrat, Liberal, or Green, we all care right for nothing more now than that violence should end, civil society should rebuild, and a democratic and peaceful solution be found in Ukraine.

We have a tremendous diaspora of Ukrainian Canadians living here who also inform us about their personal histories and connection to the land.

However, I find it hard to hear the word “leadership” used. We are not in a position of leadership in the world any more. The most we can do, I think, as Canadians of goodwill, is to urge the current administration to do more. Leadership is being taken more by the European Union. Leadership is being taken by the United States, which has, right now, put forward a substantial amount of money to backstop and protect the Ukrainian economy.

I would love to see us in a position of leadership, but what would that take?

I think we best play a role in the world, when we do play one, of a concerned, compassionate middle power. I think when we aspire to leadership, we do not, at this point, have the credentials to back it up, as much as it pains me to say that.

● (2300)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Chair, I would respond to the question by acknowledging that one of the greatest and most valuable assets and strengths Canada has as a nation is our diversity. If we take a look at our Ukrainian community, estimated to be over 1.2 million people, which is not to exclude others in any fashion whatsoever, I believe that Canada has demonstrated in the past that we have something we can bring to the table.

Government Orders

I do believe, to a certain degree, that our leadership role in the world has somewhat diminished over recent years.

However, I believe the expectation that our citizens have of political leaders is that we need to demonstrate leadership where we can make a difference, to at least do what we can. That is why, on several occasions this evening, I have risen to emphasize how important things such as the observers are, because they do make a difference. Canada does have a unique relationship with Ukraine. It goes back a number of years already.

I think that if we can somehow come together, as I know we can, at the end of the day, we will be able to contribute to a long-term, healthy relationship between what I would suggest are two great nations.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Hélène Laverdière (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, NDP): Mr. Chair, I would like to thank my colleague for his interesting speech.

I would like to remind him that, in its 2008 Speech from the Throne, the Conservative government promised to create a democracy promotion agency. In the end, it dropped that idea.

Does my colleague think that such an agency or an organization like Rights and Democracy, which has, sadly, disappeared, could have helped Ukraine in its ongoing transition to democracy?

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Chair, I do believe that there are organizations within Canada; for example, Democracy Watch, the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, and different provincial organizations, including a wonderful local chapter of the Ukrainian Canadian Congress, headed by Oksana Bondarchuk in Winnipeg, someone who keeps me quite well informed, along with a number of other individuals like Bill Balan and many others in Winnipeg.

There are organizations that do have something to offer in terms of assisting us in developing policy. That includes foreign policy related to what is happening today in Ukraine.

I do believe that these organizations should play some sort of a role in how Canada best deals with the relationship with Ukraine, not only for today but also going into the future.

It goes beyond the situation we are in today, which hopefully by the end of June will be a whole lot better. I think we have to look at how we build bridges that are going to sustain a long-term relationship.

For example, what about the relationship between parliamentarians here in Canada and in Ukraine? What about institutional organizations such as Elections Canada and the independent election authority, whatever that might be, the commission in Ukraine? We need to build on those types of relationships and use the different stakeholders that have a very good understanding.

I am amazed at the type of understanding that a number of these stakeholders have of the reality of Ukraine today. I think we need to take advantage of that. I did not know this, but the mother of my colleague from Toronto Centre actually had something to do with the current constitution of Ukraine. Given her own personal background, I think she would have been a valuable asset to the trip to Ukraine

with the Minister of Foreign Affairs. There should have also been a New Democratic member of Parliament going.

We need to start looking at ways in which we can bring experts working together to Ukraine, and make it reciprocal. I was at a foreign affairs committee meeting a few years back. We actually had a Ukrainian parliamentarian come and make a presentation. There are issues we can further develop.

To conclude my remarks, we do want to see more tangible action taken. We should not underestimate the potential of other stakeholders beyond the House of Commons.

● (2305)

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Chair, we have all taken pains in this discussion tonight to avoid anything that smacks of partisanship, because it is inappropriate.

However, there is a point in what my hon. colleague has said. I also wish the hon. Minister of Foreign Affairs, in travelling to Ukraine, had been able to bring a delegation that represented Canada and not just the ruling party.

It has become routine with the current administration—and not with previous administrations—to exclude the other parties in various fora, whether it is climate negotiations or a state visit to Israel. As the Green Party leader here in the House, I know we are recognized as Greens. We are not yet a 12-member caucus, so I would not have expected to have been included.

However, as the hon. member for Winnipeg North mentioned, there is expertise on all sides of the House. Just on reflection, without trying to score any partisan points, I would hope that in the spirit we are taking tonight and in reflecting on the importance of democracy and the importance of civil society, reflecting all parts of society, that perhaps the current administration would reconsider and include all sides of the House in future delegations.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux: Mr. Chair, it was a lost opportunity. Not to focus too much attention on that particular point this evening, when we look forward to what is going to be taking place over the next number of weeks, hopefully the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Prime Minister will recognize that was a lost opportunity and we can do much better if we are prepared to take advantage of what everyone here has to offer, which means incorporating opposition parties as part of the program.

Ms. Lois Brown (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development, CPC): Mr. Chair, I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this debate. Like so many of my colleagues, I have been following recent developments in Ukraine closely. Our thoughts and prayers go out to all of those affected by the violence.

Our government was very pleased to learn of the dramatic decisions of the Ukrainian parliament over the weekend, and we believe that these developments represent a return to genuine democracy in Ukraine, reflecting the will of the majority of Ukrainians. We are confident that Ukrainian democrats are committed to ensuring an orderly return to democracy and to economic reform. As always, Canada will be there to support Ukrainians during this process.

Government Orders

In the immediate term, our government has responded to the urgent needs of those Ukrainians injured in the protests. Our government also contributed to legal assistance for protesters charged by the Yanukovich government. We are pleased to note that on Sunday, Ukraine's new government dropped all charges against protesters and released them from prison. We must not, however, make assumptions about the path that Ukraine will follow in the wake of these historic events. Rather, we should stand ready to support first steps toward the re-emergence of democracy in the short term and stable economic development in the long term.

After so many years of bad and corrupt governance, the reforms that are needed in Ukraine are dramatic and will require diligence and support from other nations. Canada has always been on the side of Ukrainians who are fighting for their belief 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.

I would now like to take a few moments to tell members about Canada's efforts in the long-term development work to help Ukraine achieve lasting economic prosperity. 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 and, more recently, to herald the release of Yulia Tymoshenko from prison.

Since Ukraine's independence, 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 slower and more difficult than perhaps anticipated. This transition is not yet complete.

To build resilience and achieve broad-based prosperity, Ukraine must diversify and grow its real economy, especially through developing its small and medium-sized enterprises, a sector that is far smaller than in other European countries. Stimulating the growth of these enterprises will also help to expand and strengthen the middle class. We know from experience that a healthy, civically engaged middle class and healthy small-business sector will help to nurture a well-functioning democracy and add to security and stability.

Given its rich natural resources, low labour costs, and large and well-educated population, Ukraine has excellent economic potential, but it will face challenges in becoming competitive. If concluded, planned free trade agreements with Europe and Canada would 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 to create a supportive framework for local business growth, and for trade and investment. We are providing security and a level playing field for small and medium-sized enterprises, from fair and transparent regulations to independent and predictable application of the rule of law.

● (2310)

We are also supporting technical assistance from the International Monetary Fund to the government of Ukraine in the areas of banking sector regulation and monetary policy adjustment. We are open to expanding and broadening this assistance should Ukraine's new government demonstrate a commitment to fundamental economic reforms.

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 will 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, particularly 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.

As the Ukrainian economy continues to grow, so will the economic ties between our two countries. Canada's development program has contributed significantly to enhancing Ukraine's sustainable economic growth. One of those areas is agriculture, and I hope that during my time for answering questions I will have some time to reflect on some of the incredible investments Canada has made.

Ukraine is a country of focus for Canada. We continue to build into its development. We know that by doing so, our people-to-people ties will be strengthened.

● (2315)

The Chair: Unfortunately, it being 11:17 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 53(1), the committee will rise and I will leave the Chair.

(Government Business No. 8 reported)

[*Translation*]

The Deputy Speaker: Accordingly, the House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 2 p.m., pursuant to order made Friday, February 7, 2014.

(The House adjourned at 11:17 p.m.)

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