



HOUSE OF COMMONS  
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES  
CANADA

# House of Commons Debates

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OFFICIAL REPORT  
(HANSARD)

**Wednesday, March 5, 2014**

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**Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer**

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# HOUSE OF COMMONS

Wednesday, March 5, 2014

The House met at 2 p.m.

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*Prayers*

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• (1405)

[*English*]

**The Speaker:** It being Wednesday, we will now have the singing of our national anthem led by the hon. member for Kingston and the Islands.

[*Members sang the national anthem*]

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## STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[*English*]

### SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON VIOLENCE AGAINST INDIGENOUS WOMEN

**Mrs. Stella Ambler (Mississauga South, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to thank the House and my colleagues on the Special Committee on Violence Against Indigenous Women for the honour of being elected chair of this indeed very special committee.

Over the past year, the committee heard from many witnesses about this tragic situation affecting aboriginal women and girls across Canada. For me the most meaningful moments were at the three-hour meeting with friends and families of the missing and murdered women, who told their stories in a straightforward but poignant way. I know I speak for the entire all-party committee when I say that we were all deeply moved by what we heard. It could not have been easy for the friends and families to open their hearts so honestly and openly, but we were honoured that they were willing and able to do so.

I would like to thank the committee members on all sides for their hard work. I know that each and every one of us wants to see an end to violence against aboriginal women and girls.

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### BIRTHDAY CONGRATULATIONS

**Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to Canada's newest nonagenarian, Bill Scandlan.

In my eight years as the MP for Hamilton Mountain, I have never before singled out a constituent for special recognition on the floor of this chamber, but Bill is special. Whether it has been as a labour leader, a city councillor, a community volunteer, or a political activist, Bill has always put service above self. He has single-handedly enriched the lives of literally thousands of Hamiltonians, many of whom may not even be aware that it was Bill's guiding hand that led to the progress they have made.

As a lifelong member of the CCF-NDP, he has been an amazing mentor for whole new generations of political activists. I know that I would not be in my current position if Bill's deep-seated commitment to women's equality and social justice had not led him to push this once young female candidate to aspire to an elected position. Through the many ups and downs of it all, his support was and is as constant as it is unconditional.

It is with deep affection, respect, and huge admiration that I want to wish Bill a very happy 90th birthday. Hugs to Bill. He is simply the best.

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### KINSMEN FOUNDATION TELEMIRACLE

**Mr. Ray Boughen (Palliser, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to extend congratulations to the Kinsmen Foundation on another successful Telemiracle to help families with children with disabilities and people with special needs.

Over the 20-hour telethon last weekend, viewers were asked to open their hearts and wallets and to ring those phones, and indeed, the viewers responded to the tune of almost \$5,286,000. Along the way, more than 40 musical and dance ensembles from across the country entertained viewers.

Now in its 38th year, the Telemiracle has raised more than \$100 million to benefit thousands of Saskatchewan residents.

I would like to extend thanks to the warm-hearted Saskatchewan population for supporting their community and to the thousands of hard-working folks at the Kinsmen Foundation for their efforts year-round to improve the quality of life for Saskatchewan residents.

*Statements by Members***UNIVERSITY OF GUELPH**

**Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it gives me great pleasure to rise today to recognize the 50th anniversary year of the University of Guelph. Founded in 1964, the U of G came together through uniting the long-standing Ontario Agricultural College, the Ontario Veterinary College, and the Macdonald Institute into a premier academic institution whose mission is to change lives and improve life.

The university's exceptional reputation of academic and research excellence lives on through the outstanding work of more than 30 Canada Research Chairs, groundbreaking programs like the barcode of life, and the many experts who appear before our parliamentary committees who hail from the University of Guelph.

This great university is a cornerstone of our community in Guelph. Its staff and students and the residents of our community have created a co-operative and caring environment, fostering a spirit of compassion and intellect and making our community one of the best in the country.

I congratulate the students, staff, faculty, and alumni on 50 incredible years as we look forward to an even brighter future.

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**MARLIN STYNER**

**Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is with a heavy heart that I rise to inform this House of the passing of a truly incredible individual and a personal friend, Marlin Styner.

In 1981, at the age of 18, Marlin became a quadriplegic when the vehicle he was riding in struck a cow. Marlin became a leader in our community with his message that success is not determined by physical strength or appearance but rather by our attitude and the boundaries we set for ourselves in our own minds. This attitude opened doors for Marlin and for other disabled people throughout our province.

The business administration diploma he received at RDC was the start of an incredible journey that proved his point about boundaries. He received the mayor's special recognition award for humanitarianism and held the position as chair of the Alberta Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

On behalf of my family and colleagues in this House, particularly the member for Charleswood—St. James—Assiniboia, I extend our deepest sympathies to Marlin's wife Diane and those loved ones who have always surrounded them both.

\* \* \*

● (1410)

**LORETTA SAUNDERS**

**Ms. Niki Ashton (Churchill, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today, New Democrats mourn alongside the family of Loretta Saunders. This young Inuk woman from Happy Valley-Goose Bay was in the midst of her studies when she was kidnapped and murdered.

Many of us have just come from a vigil on the Hill, where indigenous women and their allies sent a clear message to the Conservative government. The time for talk is over. The time for

study is over. The time for action is now. Indigenous peoples are not asking for an inquiry into the deaths and disappearances of over 800 indigenous women. They are demanding it.

From the beginning, the NDP has stood with the families of the first nations, Inuit, and Métis women who have been lost. Their ask has been clear and consistent: no more stolen sisters. Yet the government stubbornly refuses to hear their cries. The same week Loretta Saunders died, six more aboriginal women went missing.

Saturday is International Women's Day. Alongside our sisters from across the globe, we will stand tall and strong and demand full and lasting gender equality. Today we lend that strength to Loretta's family. Loretta's life is cherished and valued, and there must be justice.

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**PROSTITUTION**

**Mrs. Joy Smith (Kildonan—St. Paul, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, March 8 is International Women's Day, an opportunity to celebrate the progress that has been made toward equality for women worldwide.

Sadly, many women and girls in Canada continue to face injustice and inequality through prostitution. Our nation is now at a tipping point. We must ensure that we do not legalize an industry that promotes and normalizes the exploitation of women at the hands of pimps and johns, nor should we continue to treat prostitution as a nuisance.

Canada must take an approach that recognizes the inherent harm of prostitution to our most vulnerable citizens. We must adopt a made-in-Canada approach that severely punishes pimps and johns without criminalizing the victims, that provides robust programs to help women exit prostitution, and that fully reflects the equality of women as human beings, not objects to be bought and sold.

Today, as we are reminded of the progress of women's equality, let us be resolved to stand ever stronger against sex slavery and gender violence. We can do better.

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**RCMP SUPERINTENDENT BILL MACRAE**

**Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Regina—Lumsden—Lake Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to bring to the attention of the House the recent passing of a legendary member of the RCMP, Mr. Bill MacRae. In the words of our own Sergeant-at-Arms, Kevin Vickers, Bill MacRae was the heart and soul of the RCMP.

He was also a visionary, because it was Bill MacRae who convinced his superiors to include human relations training as part of the RCMP's core curriculum. More importantly, it was Bill MacRae who convinced his superiors to invite females to join the ranks of our national police force. Bill MacRae was also the one who convinced his superiors to allow first nations men and women to join the force. Bill's insight and intelligence and his humour and humanity truly transformed our national police force. In many respects, his passing marks the end of an era.

While we offer our condolences to Bill's family, I would also invite all of my colleagues to join with me in paying a final tribute to a remarkable man and a truly great Canadian, Bill MacRae.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

### FOOD WASTE

**Ms. Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the most recent FAO report states:

...given the limited availability of natural resources it is more effective to reduce food losses than increase food production in order to feed a growing world population.

Canadians waste \$27 billion worth of food each year. More than a third of a person's groceries end up in the garbage every week. Most food waste occurs toward the end of the food supply chain, with processors, retailers and consumers.

Meanwhile, more than 800,000 people use food banks every month. That is huge.

The federal government has a role to play, which is why I am moving a motion in the House of Commons. My motion proposes concrete measures, such as declaring October 20 of each year National Day Against Food Waste and developing a pan-Canadian food waste reduction plan.

Now it is time for all of us to do our part. Food waste is everyone's business.

\* \* \*

• (1415)

[English]

### VENEZUELA

**Mr. Rob Anders (Calgary West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this past weekend I met with a woman whose young niece was a beauty queen in Venezuela. Her 22-year-old niece was shot in the head and died from her wounds at the hospital.

Genesis Carmona was an unarmed student protester. Her grieving aunt and others are calling for an emergency debate by the Organization of American States to discuss the crisis in Venezuela. These petitioners—

**The Speaker:** Order. I know the hon. member is reading from notes, but the camera is picking up something that may be perceived by some members as a prop. I hope the member will just stick to the notes that he has in his hands.

The hon. member for Calgary West.

**Mr. Rob Anders:** Mr. Speaker, these petitioners are asking for economic sanctions and the freezing of the Maduro government's assets unless the use of water cannons stops. They are also asking for a delegation to monitor and report on human rights violations in Venezuela.

Furthermore, I call upon the Maduro government to release all those detained during the protests, to immediately cease all government interference with peaceful protesters, and to ensure those people who are perpetrating the violence bear the full weight of the law.

### Statements by Members

A democratic government not only respects but protects its citizens' rights of expression and assembly. Hugo Chavez has passed away, and Venezuelans want to turn the page. Like many, Venezuela yearns for freedom.

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### BULLYING

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, bullying is taking a toll on children across the country, and too often we hear the sad stories of kids who choose suicide over dealing with the taunts and jeers and broken friendships, so I want to share a story of a little girl who is not willing to let bullying define her or stop her from growing to be the young woman she dreams of becoming.

Alvena Little-Wolf Ear lives in Nanaimo. She is only nine years old. The bullying started in grade 3 with taunts about her weight and her first nation background. It was so bad at one point that Alvena said, "Mom, I bet if I was dead, kids at school would be happier."

Her mother, Annette, did the right thing and convinced Alvena to speak to a therapist and share what was happening. By breaking her silence with two trusted adults, Alvena found the strength to start sharing her story with thousands of people.

She asked her mom to post her story and a picture of herself on the Facebook page "Healthy Active Natives" so that people would know that she was being bullied but that she was determined to end the bullying by using exercise to change her life for the better.

Racism and sexism are ugly words, but the raw truth is that children as young as Alvena have to deal with them. We all need to do more about raising awareness of bullying and how it affects children. Alvena Little-Wolf Ear will not let it stop her, and we should not either.

\* \* \*

### NATURAL RESOURCES

**Mr. Chris Warkentin (Peace River, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we understand that resource development creates jobs and grows the economy. In fact, nearly 20% of our GDP comes from natural resource development, and one in 10 Canadians relies on it for employment.

The NDP wants to destroy these jobs with their opposition to new infrastructure and development in these industries. They are so opposed to resource development that even labour unions are attacking the NDP's flawed economic theories.

On this side of the House, we are committed to protecting Canadian jobs while ensuring that jobs and these projects are safe for Canadians and for the environment. It is time for the opposition to get onside with hard-working Canadians.

*Oral Questions***LORETTA SAUNDERS**

**Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, today we honour the life of Loretta Saunders at a vigil here on Parliament Hill. I want to offer our deepest sympathies and condolences to the family and friends of Loretta on behalf of all Labradorians and on behalf of the Liberal caucus.

The tragic death of Loretta Saunders has hit the hearts of Canadians all across the country with the story of a young Inuit girl from Labrador who left home with tremendous hope and promise and with aspirations to conquer the world.

She studied at Saint Mary's University and was successful in overcoming significant personal challenges in her own life. While doing so, she undertook her studies on missing and murdered indigenous women in Canada with the goal of making a difference for all aboriginal women in our nation.

Since I was elected in May, this is the second aboriginal woman in my riding to be carelessly and senselessly murdered. Another young Innu woman, Bernice Rich, was also tragically killed in June of last year in Sheshatshui. Today we remember her as well as the hundreds of other aboriginal women who have met the same fate.

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**CANADIAN PEACEKEEPERS**

**Hon. Gordon O'Connor (Carleton—Mississippi Mills, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, for a newly independent nation the road to peace and stability is seldom smooth.

On March 4, 1964, the UN adopted a resolution calling for the deployment of peacekeeping forces to the Mediterranean island of Cyprus. Canada's peacekeepers used diplomatic as well as soldiering skills to maintain a fragile balance between opposing forces.

In all, 28 Canadian peacekeepers would pay the ultimate price between 1964 and 1993, and more than 25,000 Canadians have served in Cyprus since that first battalion of brave soldiers arrived 50 years ago this month.

As Canadians, we have charged ourselves with a solemn and never-ending mission to keep the memory of Canada's veterans above the tide of time.

Lest we forget.

\* \* \*

● (1420)

**UKRAINE**

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I travelled extensively in both Ukraine and Russia and I gained an enormous respect for their cultures and languages. Today I stand with all those in Ukraine and Russia who are calling for peace.

[*Translation*]

Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity must be fully respected. Ukrainians must be able to live in peace. By taking military action, Russia is violating its obligations under international law and its multilateral agreements with Ukraine.

[*Member spoke in Ukrainian.*]

[*English*]

**CONSERVATIVE PARTY OF CANADA**

**Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadians do not deserve empty promises. The Liberals chatter about standing up for the middle class, but the Liberal leader has offered nothing to demonstrate it. We all know that charisma cannot be substituted for substance.

On this side of the House we show substance every day. We are showing average Canadians that they can count on this government to make life more affordable by keeping money in their pockets. Since the Conservatives were elected in 2006, we have cut taxes 160 times. That is what a plan for the middle class looks like. The average family of four now saves \$3,400 a year in taxes. We are also helping middle-class Canadians find jobs through the Canada job grant and we are giving \$100 million a year in loans to apprentices. We are doing all this while balancing the budget in 2015.

I am sure, even if my colleagues opposite do not know it, that budgets do not balance themselves.

**ORAL QUESTIONS**

[*English*]

**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the United States has urged Russia to accept observers from the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe to monitor the situation in Ukraine and safeguard human rights. Will Canada also be sending observers?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the short answer is yes, and I appreciate the question from the leader of the NDP.

Canada will contribute observers to an important military observer mission in a coordinated effort to better monitor the Russian military intervention in Crimea.

I can also announce today that at the request of the Prosecutor General of Ukraine, we will be imposing economic sanctions on members of the Yanukovich regime. I am also announcing that we are suspending our participation in a joint economic and commercial commission with Russia.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased that the Prime Minister has listened to reason regarding the freezing of assets.

Can the Prime Minister tell us what financial aid Canada is giving to Ukraine to help stabilize its economy during this crisis? Has Canada approached the International Monetary Fund?

*Oral Questions*

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I told the Prime Minister of Ukraine that Canada is prepared to help his country in partnership with our international partners. We are currently in discussions with the International Monetary Fund. We are prepared to co-operate in this regard. It is critical that there be economic stability in Ukraine.

\* \* \*

● (1425)

**DEMOCRATIC REFORM**

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the Conservatives used every trick in the book to block the NDP's efforts to ensure that public consultations are held in Canada on the Conservatives' electoral "deform" bill.

Why are the Conservatives afraid to let Canadians have a say about democracy?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I am very disappointed to see that the NDP decided to oppose the electoral reform before reading the bill. The party's critic admitted as much. The bill is currently in committee. I look forward to the committee's decisions.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister does not want Canadians to have a say. However, the NDP will hold consultations and listen to Canadians.

What the Prime Minister is doing is unprecedented in Canadian history. He is using his majority to favour his party. It is unprecedented. Never has a government imposed closure for partisan political purposes. Is that the real reason why the Conservatives want Canadians to be kept in the dark?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, on the contrary, I noticed that the NDP decided to oppose the bill before even reading it.

[*English*]

That is the fact.

The reality here is that the partisan tactics are those of the NDP, which decided and said very publicly that it opposed the legislation even though its critic had not even read it.

These are sensible, long-overdue changes. We encourage Parliament to take a look at them. They should benefit Canadian democracy generally. We encourage the parliamentary study and encourage debate on the actual contents of the bill instead of the conspiracy theories of the leader of the NDP.

\* \* \*

**ETHICS**

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, if they are really that proud of it, why are they so afraid to talk to Canadians?

Yesterday over 153 Conservatives voted to let one of their own MPs off the hook on charges that he knowingly made false statements in Parliament. Does the Prime Minister think it is okay for his MPs to present fabricated evidence in Parliament as long as they admit it after they get caught?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the member in question, as you know very well, voluntarily apologized. He, at his own initiative, brought this to light in the House of Commons and corrected the record, and he is to be commended for doing so.

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**FOREIGN AFFAIRS**

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we welcome the Prime Minister's comments with respect to asset freezes for the former Ukrainian regime and the importance of human rights observers. As the Prime Minister will know, there are democratic elections coming up in May to elect a new democratic government in Ukraine.

We are wondering if the Prime Minister could report to the House on how Canada will play a significant role in ensuring that there are electoral observers in place, well before the election in May, to assure Canadians and the world community that they are in fact free, fair, and honest elections to choose a new democratic government for the people of Ukraine.

**Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, when I visited Ukraine last week at the request of the Prime Minister, we offered the new prime minister, the new president, and the new government our full support in the conduct of the presidential election on May 25. We have provided substantial assistance in the past, and we will obviously provide long-term and short-term election observers to ensure that the will and courage of the Ukrainian people be fully respected by the international community.

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[*Translation*]**INFRASTRUCTURE**

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, Canada's economic growth is stagnating. Our economic growth since 2006 is the worst it has been since the tough times of R. B. Bennett. Furthermore, according to the OECD, 138 countries will have better growth this year, including Australia, Mexico, New Zealand and the United States.

The Minister of Finance thinks that the best solution is to invest in community infrastructure. Why, then, does the Prime Minister plan on cutting the building Canada fund by 87% next month?

● (1430)

[*English*]

**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, our government has proudly made unprecedented investments in Canada's infrastructure since 2006. Economic action plan 2013 announced a new building Canada plan, which provides \$53.5 billion in new-investment funding over 10 years, beginning in 2014–15 for Canada's infrastructure. That is unprecedented.

*Oral Questions*

**Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.):** Let us be clear. For the current fiscal year, the building Canada fund is budgeted at \$1.6 billion, but next year, beginning next month, that amount drops to \$210 million. That is \$1.6 billion now, and \$210 million next year. Do the math. That is a reduction by 87%. In fact, building Canada will not make a full recovery until 2019. So why does the government seek to rival R.B. Bennett in terms of economic growth?

**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, these investments in infrastructure are of \$70 billion over 10 years. We know for the Liberals, the budget balances by itself. That is what we are doing. We are continuing to invest in infrastructure and balancing the books.

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**DEMOCRATIC REFORM**

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, let me ask the Prime Minister a simple question that so far he has refused to answer. Did anyone involved in writing his unfair elections act speak to campaign operatives at Conservative Party headquarters while it was being drafted? Can Canadians please have a clear answer, once and for all?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have no intention of indulging the conspiracy theories of the leader of the NDP. The proposals the government has made on the Elections Act are in black and white and they are before this Parliament. I would encourage the New Democrats to read them, to take them seriously, and to engage in intelligent and informed debate on them.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we take the fundamental rules of our democracy so seriously that we take great offence to see that for the first time in the history of Canada a government is using its majority to change those rules to its own advantage.

[*Translation*]

I had a very simple question that the Prime Minister seems to be avoiding. Canadians want to know whether this bill was designed first and foremost to put the Conservative Party at an advantage in the next election.

Did someone at the Prime Minister's Office contact the Conservative Party headquarters when this bill was being drafted, yes or no? It is as simple as that.

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, I have no intention of indulging the opposition leader's conspiracy theories.

[*English*]

The reality is the following. The NDP had decided for its own partisan reasons to approach this entire bill with a series of conspiracy theories rather than actually examining the contents of legislation, which, as the public recognizes, do not support any of those conspiracy theories. These are important matters for our democracy, they are important reforms, and I would encourage the NDP to reverse course and start looking at them seriously.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the fact that the Prime Minister will not answer that simple question speaks volumes.

Is the Prime Minister dodging the question because he knows the unfair elections act was designed by his party to make it more difficult to vote for people who do not vote Conservative?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the intention of the act is to make sure that all people who vote are valid, registered voters and that they can identify themselves. These are objectives making sure that the vote is fair and that all people who vote are entitled to vote and only vote once. I think these are the fundamental characteristics of a democracy.

[*Translation*]

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, that is what they are trying to fix with this? Perhaps the Prime Minister could tell us exactly how many people have been charged with voting illegally. The Prime Minister has claimed that people have been charged.

How many are there, exactly?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, independent authorities are responsible for investigations. The purpose of the bill is to ensure that there are systems in place to guarantee that votes are valid.

• (1435)

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, perhaps the real reason the Prime Minister is unable to answer is that he claimed that there was a massive problem with illegal voting, when that claim is completely false.

The Prime Minister is telling us that they are going to prevent hundreds of thousands of Canadians from voting because of an *Infoman* gag? If that is the case, they are the butt of the joke here.

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, having registered voters is one of the foundations of democracy. Each person gets one vote and needs to be identified.

[*English*]

The only question Canadians are really asking is why the NDP would think it is so important for people to be able to vote without any identification whatsoever. We obviously do not think that is appropriate.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, this is going to serve a useful purpose because, drop by drop, the reality is going to start to sink in.

In order to vouch for someone at the polls, one actually has to show valid ID, which provides one's name and address. Does the Prime Minister really believe that tens of thousands of people are committing fraud, leaving their names and addresses behind, hoping that nobody ever catches them? Is that his theory?



*Oral Questions***AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the one thing I agree with the leader of the NDP on is the longer they listen to him, drop by drop something really is sinking in.

I would just point out that the law outlines 39 authorized various forms of identification that voters can use, and any two of those would be valid. Obviously, this is to facilitate identification and make it easy for people to vote.

\* \* \*

**ETHICS**

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, we learned earlier this week that negotiations on the cover-up deal between Mike Duffy and Nigel Wright began in the Prime Minister's Office, in the Prime Minister's "private high-security boardroom". Did the Prime Minister ever ask Nigel Wright what he was talking about with Mike Duffy in the Prime Minister's private boardroom in the middle of the Senate scandal?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, once again, this question has been asked and answered on many occasions. As we know, the RCMP has thoroughly looked at the matter and been very clear that I had no knowledge of the discussions to which the hon. member refers.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, after the Prime Minister's own lawyer, Ben Perrin, helped negotiate the cover-up deal between Duffy and Wright, Mr. Perrin's emails were illegally deleted, stealing a page from Dalton McGuinty.

Why did the Prime Minister's staff in the Privy Council Office tell officials at Library and Archives Canada not to speak to journalists investigating their cover-up?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, just about every single assertion in that preamble is categorically false.

However, on the issue of Library and Archives Canada, as he will know well, these are decisions of Library and Archives Canada, and these questions should be directed to that independent organization.

**Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP):** Actually, Mr. Speaker, after Ben Perrin's e-mails were illegally deleted, journalists asked Library and Archives Canada to brief them on the laws that require important government documents to be preserved and protected.

The Prime Minister's staff in the Privy Council Office stepped in and halted the briefing.

On whose authority did the Prime Minister's staff prevent public servants from briefing reporters about the law?

**Right Hon. Stephen Harper (Prime Minister, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as the RCMP made very clear, this government, this administration, has turned over all emails and all information in our possession and turned them over as soon as we had them, and the suggestions contained in the preamble of the question are completely false.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Transport has no choice but to act, and fast, on the western grain transportation crisis. It is a \$5-billion mess, caused by the way the current government designed the system, under the thumb of railways.

Farmers are demanding immediate action, and so are premiers Wall and Redford. The feds do have the necessary emergency powers under section 47 of the Canada Transportation Act.

Would the transport minister use them today to get prairie grain moving and to compensate farmers for their losses?

• (1440)

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as a western Canadian and former farmer, with lots of family and friends still involved in farm operations, I understand the situation they are facing out there. That is why we continue to have those discussions with a number of people in the whole supply chain. We continue to look at all options before us, and we will continue to do that until we have the right solutions that seem to please the vast majority of that supply chain.

**Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in other words: please the railways.

Beyond just today, the government's defective legislation on railway services has to be fixed.

More than a year ago, the current government was warned that its new law would not work because there was no clear definition of services, no objective way to measure success or failure, and no liquidated damages payable to farmers when the railways screw up.

The necessary amendments to fix this mess are already drafted.

Will the government bring them forward for unanimous consent before the House adjourns for two weeks, on Friday?

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is a little rich taking these instructions from the member for Wascana, who did away with the crow rate without any kind of discussion at all, paid out one year of what was supposed to be a seven-year payment. For him to come forward now and somehow intimate that we are friends of the railways, I think he should look in the mirror.

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**THE ENVIRONMENT**

**Hon. John McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, last week, Premier Wall said that we need those GHG regulations to come forward. Former environment minister Prentice said that "As conservatives we must believe in and establish and enforce world-class regulatory and monitoring standards."

*Oral Questions*

Would the minister tell her predecessor and Premier Wall that the Prime Minister has punted the GHG regulations so that there is no agenda, there is no interest, there is no activity, and there is no progress? Or are we going to get the minister's usual singsong answer, where she takes credit where no credit is due?

**Hon. Leona Aglukkaq (Minister of the Environment, Minister of the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency and Minister for the Arctic Council, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, again, our government is a world leader when it comes to addressing climate change. We continue to work with the provinces and the territories on reducing emissions from the oil and gas sector, and it is premature to comment further on any future regulations, as we are in discussions.

However, what I can tell the member is that thanks to our actions, we have seen significant reductions in greenhouse gases, unlike the Liberal government that increased greenhouse gas emissions by 130 megatonnes.

\* \* \*

**AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD**

**Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, Alberta and Saskatchewan are calling upon the government to intervene, to address the serious backlog of grain in the Prairies.

Alberta's agriculture minister is telling Ottawa to bring in fines against the railways that deliver inadequate service. Alberta's farmers are telling me it is long past time to impose tough cash penalties on railway companies. The rail act has no teeth without regulations that would address these bottlenecks.

Would the Minister of Transport finally stand to tell Canadian farmers when they can expect these regulations?

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I have explained to the member and her party over the last days, we are working with all options that are on the table, from all of the members in that supply chain, coming forward with the right application at the right time.

I had a great meeting with the ministers, both from Saskatchewan and Alberta, along with their counterparts from British Columbia and Manitoba, where this crisis is the deepest.

They have all said we need to move forward with the right applications at the right time, and that is exactly what we are doing.

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, farmers have had enough. They are not interested in having another meeting or another study.

Farmers do know why there is a grain backlog. It is because rail companies have a duopoly in this country, and I think the government on that side should actually understand that. It is not a competitive market. Farmers are the ones actually left paying the price.

The mystery really, truly is why the Minister of Transport will not introduce new rules that would get the grain moving. How many more millions must farmers on the Prairies lose because of the government's inaction?

● (1445)

**Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I constantly say to the member opposite, this is the party that represents that area of Canada. We are proud to do that.

We continue to work with all aspects and all members of that supply chain in moving forward with concrete results that will actually change the situation.

This is not a new situation in western Canada. We have been having logistics fights with the railways and the old Canadian Wheat Board for years. We understand that movement is required, and at the right time and place that will be brought forward.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**NATIONAL DEFENCE**

**Ms. Éline Michaud (Portneuf—Jacques-Cartier, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, as long as men and women continue to join the army to defend our country and our values, it is our duty to provide them with the assistance and support they need when they return home. The Conservatives do not seem to want to hire mental health professionals. There are currently fewer mental health professionals than before the Afghan mission began. Human resources specialists at the Department of National Defence have said so themselves: there are not enough resources.

What will the minister do to fix this problem?

[English]

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, that is actually not the case.

We have increased the annual health care expenditures by over \$100 million to over \$420 million. We have almost 400 full-time mental health professionals. We are hiring more. I can give the men and women assurance that this will continue to be a priority for this government. That will not change.

**Mr. Jack Harris (St. John's East, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, over a month ago we asked the Prime Minister to make the mental health needs of the military his personal priority. However, we are still short professionals, and the government has not even met targets it set before the war in Afghanistan.

Yesterday we asked about a mother who received a cheque for one cent, after her son committed suicide following his tour of duty. The minister pledged immediate action for the family of Justin Stark.

Can the minister now tell us what action he has taken to make up for the callous treatment of this family?

**Hon. Rob Nicholson (Minister of National Defence, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I told the House yesterday, this bureaucratic screw-up was totally unacceptable.

Immediately after question period, I contacted the department. I received assurances that something like this will not happen again; there will be better communications. This is what this woman is owed.

*Oral Questions*

We have contacted this woman, and a telephone call has been arranged for tomorrow. I will personally convey our apologies for this unacceptable incident.

\* \* \*

**NATURAL RESOURCES**

**Mrs. Patricia Davidson (Sarnia—Lambton, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, our government takes the safety of Canadians and the environment seriously.

That is why, through our responsible resource development plan, we implemented new safety measures for pipelines, including doubling the number of comprehensive audits, increasing the number of inspections by 50%, and implementing fines for companies that break environmental regulations.

Canada needs pipeline infrastructure to take advantage of our natural resource wealth. Can the parliamentary secretary update this House on new developments in this area?

**Mrs. Kelly Block (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I should add that while our government takes pipeline safety seriously, the NDP and the Liberals both voted against these measures.

Tomorrow, the NEB will make a final decision on the proposal to reverse the flow of Line 9 to bring oil from western Canada to the east. Our government relies on the independent National Energy Board to review pipeline projects based on the facts and scientific analysis.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**Mr. Mathieu Ravnat (Pontiac, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, yesterday, the President of the Treasury Board said that he could not estimate the amount he expected to spend on the employment insurance program.

That is odd because, last year, he was able to, and the year before, too. This is like the Minister of Finance saying he cannot table a budget because he does not know how much he is going to spend. For crying out loud.

Why is the minister refusing to disclose the estimates about employment insurance?

**Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to make three points.

First, the information about those expenses is in budget 2014.

[English]

Second, obviously the full accounting will be in the public accounts as they are done year after year.

Third, the kinds of estimates that the hon. member is looking for should not be in the estimates because it is not a votable item.

•(1450)

**Mr. Mathieu Ravnat (Pontiac, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the President of the Treasury Board seems to forget what his job is.

He says that only votable items should be in the main estimates, but his tabled estimates include a total of 350 non-votable items.

The minister should know, they are called statutory forecasts. Does the minister not even read his own estimates? Does he not understand that the estimates are the only opportunity for Parliament to provide oversight over planned government spending? Why is he hiding this information from Canadians?

**Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his recommendation. I will look at all the other non-votable items in the estimates for next year, but the hon. member should know that the actual estimates for the items that he seeks are found in budget 2014, as I mentioned. I think we should focus on votable items in the estimates. If he wants a fully accurate number as to what the EI figures are, they will be found in the public accounts as they are found year after year.

**Mr. Robert Chisholm (Dartmouth—Cole Harbour, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it certainly sounds as if the minister is either hiding information or he is not clear what his job is, because the point of the estimates is for the government to provide estimations of spending. We all know the government has projections for EI spending in the next fiscal year, and we now know that non-votable items are a part of the main estimates.

Can the minister tell us what the projections are for EI? Is it more or less \$20 billion?

**Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the fact of the matter is, as the hon. member should know, being a parliamentarian, that we spend on behalf of the people of Canada the amount required for EI as the demand is there. That is what we do year after year; so the hon. member should know that.

The hon. member mentions \$20 billion. I would remind him that it is his party that wants to have a \$21 billion carbon tax that will raise the EI accounts across the country.

[Translation]

**Mr. Robert Aubin (Trois-Rivières, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, my colleagues took the time to explain to the President of the Treasury Board that, contrary to what he said, non-votable items are still usually included in the main estimates.

They also explained that projections for employment insurance spending are usually part of the main estimates, so he has no reason to hide those projections.

Why is the minister refusing to give us those numbers? What is he planning to do with the fund? Is he planning to do the same thing the Liberals did?

**Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I said, the information he is looking for is in budget 2014. Every year, that information is in the public accounts.

*Oral Questions*

[English]

It is the same every year. We are seeking to make sure that the estimates have votable items in them, because that is exactly what hon. members should be seeking the information on.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**GOVERNMENT ADVERTISING**

**Ms. Lise St-Denis (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the government has an ad campaign that targets Canadians, but it seems more like propaganda than anything else. During the Oscars, the government spent hundreds of thousands of dollars unjustifiably.

How does the government reconcile the partisan spending with the fact that thousands of young Canadians will not be able to find a summer job in the next few months?

**Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the government has a responsibility to inform Canadians about the important programs and services available to them. Advertising is an essential way for the government to inform Canadians about important issues. That is our goal and our responsibility.

[English]

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, on Monday the defence minister defended wasting tax dollars on Oscar night ads promoting yesterday's programs, but Conservative budget cuts and hiring freezes have left soldiers with PTSD and their families suffering today because they cannot get the help they need, and the Conservative members seem to think that is funny. Just a \$100,000 ad could pay to help seven soldiers with PTSD succeed in their transition to civilian life.

Once again, why does the minister choose partisan self-interest over the health of injured soldiers.

● (1455)

**Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I have already mentioned, we have a responsibility to communicate with Canadians on important programs that might be of value to Canadians in their lives. We will continue to do so.

I would mention again that, when we actually allocate money for advertising, it goes to advertising, unlike during the previous Liberal government when it went into the black hole of various felons who are now in jail.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

**ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS**

**Mr. Romeo Saganash (Abitibi—Baie-James—Nunavik—Eeyou, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today on Parliament Hill, there was a vigil to honour the memory of Loretta Saunders. Her name is added to those of Kelly Nicole Goforth, Heather Ballantyne, Cassandra Joan Desjarlais, Miranda McKinney, Jodi Roberts, Tricia Boisvert and Rocelyn Gabriel. These women were murdered or have gone missing in the past six months.

Does the government understand that a public inquiry is the only way to honour the memory of the some 800 missing and murdered aboriginal women?

[English]

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, it is certainly fair to say that Canadians across the country and here in the House of Commons are shocked and saddened by the death of Loretta Saunders.

However, the reality is that we are acting on issues that pertain specifically to violence against women. This government has enacted more than 30 pieces of legislation with justice and public safety intention. We have brought forward more tools for police to respond specifically, more programs designed specifically to help vulnerable women get out of violent situations. We have enabled aboriginal women to have matrimonial property.

Sadly, rather than working with the government, this member and his party have—

**The Speaker:** Order, please. The hon. member for Nanaimo—Cowichan.

**Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today people gathered on Parliament Hill to remember Loretta Saunders and demanded action, just as this week the Canadian Human Rights Commission joined the growing number of voices calling on the government for a national inquiry into missing and murdered indigenous women and girls.

Will the Conservatives acknowledge the severity of the problem and take real action? Will they finally move forward with a national inquiry and an action plan on ending this tragedy?

**Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, while others advocate for more studies, this government is acting. We have taken significant steps already, directly aimed at addressing violence. We have given the police more tools, are establishing a new national centre for missing persons, have committed to a new DNA databank for missing persons, enhanced the Canadian Police Information Centre, and created a national website to help older missing and murdered cases match with remains.

We continue to give the police the tools and increase the laws to sanction violence against women and girls, and this member opposes them.

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**SMALL BUSINESS**

**Mr. John Carmichael (Don Valley West, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, Canadian small businesses are the engine of Canada's economy and are responsible for creating high quality jobs and economic growth in communities from coast to coast to coast. Our government recognizes the important role that small businesses play in our economy.

Could the Minister of State for Small Business and Tourism, and Agriculture please update this House on what else our government is doing to help Canada's small businesses grow and remain competitive?

**Hon. Maxime Bernier (Minister of State (Small Business and Tourism, and Agriculture), CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague for his hard work on this file. This is important for our economy.

We want to be sure that entrepreneurs have less red tape and pay lower taxes. Unlike the opposition, we will not impose on them a \$21-billion carbon tax. Unlike the Liberals, we will not put this country further into debt because we know that more debt results in more taxes in the end.

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#### PUBLIC SAFETY

**Hon. Wayne Easter (Malpeque, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, the Minister of Public Safety is about to cancel one of the most successful programs protecting public safety. Why?

The program, Circles of Support and Accountability, is responsible for an 83% reduction in sexual recidivism, and a 73% reduction in all types of violent recidivism. The bottom line for Circles of Support and Accountability is no more victims, and it works.

Why is the minister increasing the risk to public safety by cancelling this valuable program?

• (1500)

**Hon. Steven Blaney (Minister of Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we always welcome initiatives. That is why we have put in place a national crime prevention strategy. This offers five-year support to local initiatives. This program has the support of our government.

The member is referring to a grant that was provided by Correctional Services Canada. Correctional Services Canada has to do its best job for those inmates who are behind bars.

\* \* \*

[Translation]

#### CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

**Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the findings of a recent Wellesley Institute study on cuts to refugee health care are disturbing. In addition to being inhumane, these cuts could jeopardize public health and would probably be more costly than the savings the Conservatives hope to realize by implementing them.

Once again, the Conservatives are making poor choices in addition to playing with the health of Canadians. What does the minister intend to do to address the harmful effects of his botched reform?

**Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, we will very clearly do what we have always done on this side of the House: support refugees with quality health care funded by the federal government.

#### Oral Questions

We have to put a stop to the rhetoric of both parties opposite concerning the health care that some provinces would like to provide to people who are not refugees. Rather, those are really people who have claimed refugee status in Canada, but have been rejected, and some provinces would like to give them very generous health care benefits that even exceed those provided to Canadians. We will never accept such a policy.

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#### INFRASTRUCTURE

**Ms. Joyce Bateman (Winnipeg South Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the Prime Minister and the Minister of Infrastructure recently announced the largest infrastructure spending program in Canadian history. It provides guaranteed, long-term, stable funding, unlike the Liberal Party leader's policy proposal.

Can the Minister of Infrastructure tell the House about the funds our government has committed to investing, in whole numbers, so as to avoid the Liberals' calculations of thousands and billions, and tell us where that money will be spent?

**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 thank my hon. colleague for her excellent question. Unlike the Liberal leader, we are familiar with the numbers and we know that budgets do not balance themselves.

The new building Canada plan is the longest and most generous plan in Canada's history. Over the next 10 years, we will invest \$70 billion in infrastructure in every region of Canada. This is a record amount that is unparalleled in the history of this beautiful country.

\* \* \*

#### CANADA POST

**Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the people of Honoré-Mercier are worried. Some of the suburbs north of Montreal just lost their home mail delivery service, and now my constituents, many of whom are seniors, are wondering whether they will be the next to be hit by the Conservatives' cuts.

The government lacks vision. It slashed services, rather than finding ways to maintain them. Why did the Conservatives decide that seniors and people with disabilities no longer have the right to receive their mail at home?

[English]

**Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, as I have said in the House before, it is important to note that two-thirds of the mail delivered in Canada currently does not go to people's doors at their house. What Canada Post has indicated it must do in order to be self-sufficient into the future is to ensure that this last one-third moves to the same system that is in place for the other two-thirds.

With respect to the disabled and to seniors, Canada Post has in place methods and ways to deal with these issues, and it has been doing so for more than 25 years.

*Routine Proceedings*

[Translation]

**INTERGOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS**

**Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matane—Matapédia, BQ):** Mr. Speaker, after a year of unilateral decisions, restrictions and deadlines, yesterday Ottawa finally gave up on its idea of imposing a job training program on Quebec and is renewing a labour market agreement.

Unfortunately, in February, the minister also raised questions about the labour market development agreement, the LDMA, including the \$581 million in annual funding for Quebec.

Since the minister has finally acknowledged Quebec's expertise in labour matters, does he intend to renew the LDMA, as Quebec is asking? Or will he keep playing tough and create another conflict that has no reason to exist?

• (1505)

**Hon. Jason Kenney (Minister of Employment and Social Development and Minister for Multiculturalism, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, perhaps the reason the Bloc Québécois has only three seats is because it cannot take “yes” for an answer.

We said “yes” to Quebec's demands. The agreement we just signed with the Government of Quebec recognizes that the province has its own system of training of the workforce. My Quebec counterpart, Minister Maltais, praised the agreement, and all of Quebec's union and entrepreneurial organizations have endorsed our government's approach.

We are making unprecedented investments in job training so that Quebecers can find work in this economy.

\* \* \*

[English]

**PRESENCE IN GALLERY**

**The Speaker:** On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the United Nations peacekeeping mission in Cyprus, I would like to draw to the attention of hon. members the presence in the gallery of a delegation of veterans.

**Some hon. members:** Hear, hear!

**ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS**

[English]

**INTERPARLIAMENTARY DELEGATIONS**

**Mr. Russ Hiebert (South Surrey—White Rock—Cloverdale, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 34(1), I have the honour to present to the House, in both official languages, the report of the Canadian Parliamentary Delegation of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association respecting its participation in the bilateral visits to Bangladesh and India, March 8 to 16, 2013.

**COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE**

## TRANSPORT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND COMMUNITIES

**Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Transport, Infrastructure and Communities in relation to Bill C-3, An act to enact the aviation industry indemnity act, to amend the Aeronautics Act, the Canada Marine Act, the Marine Liability Act and the Canada Shipping Act, 2001 and to make consequential amendments to other Acts.

The committee has studied the bill and has decided to report the bill back to the House without amendment.

[Translation]

## GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS AND ESTIMATES

**Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault (Sherbrooke, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates on the supplementary estimates (C) 2013-14.

[English]

## PUBLIC SAFETY AND NATIONAL SECURITY

**Mr. Daryl Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security in relation to Bill C-479, An Act to amend the Corrections and Conditional Release Act, known as the fairness for victims act. The committee has studied the bill and decided to report the bill back to the House with amendments.

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**EMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ACT**

**Mr. Ted Hsu (Kingston and the Islands, Lib.)** moved for leave to introduce Bill C-578, An Act to amend the Employment Insurance Act (removal of waiting period for apprentices).

He said: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present a bill to amend the Employment Insurance Act. The bill is intended to remove the initial EI waiting period for the in-school training period for apprentices and to remove a disincentive for apprentices to complete their accreditation. I thank my colleague the member for Avalon for seconding the bill.

Apprentice training is a long process that ensures we have the skilled workforce that the economy needs. Right now, many apprentices start their training but do not technically finish because they are hired before being fully accredited. The system lacks incentives to return for the in-class portion of their training. For example, it takes over 6,000 hours, which is three years of 40-hour weeks, to complete an apprenticeship to be a baker. Much of this is crucial on-the-job training. However, there are two 12-week, in-school periods, and 150 hours of theoretical work to complete the apprenticeship and become an advanced baker-pâtissier. During these in-school periods, the apprentice is not paid. During the first of these periods, he or she still has to make it through the two-week waiting period before being eligible for employment insurance.

The bill builds on the Liberal Party's 2001 amendment that waived the subsequent waiting periods for apprentices, by also removing the first two-week waiting period for claimants enrolled in an apprenticeship program. I hope we will see more apprentices completing their programs, which will result in a more skilled and productive workforce.

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

\* \* \*

● (1510)

[Translation]

#### MAIN ESTIMATES 2014-15

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there have been discussions among the parties, and I believe I will have the unanimous consent of the House for the following motion, which I am moving seconded by the Minister of Justice.

That, notwithstanding the Order made February 27, 2014, to refer Votes 1 and 5 of the Main Estimates for the year 2014-15 of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food, the said Votes 1 and 5 be withdrawn from the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food and referred to the Standing Committee on Health.

[English]

**Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I understand that the agreement was on votes 1 and 5, and I am asking if the House leader for the government side could confirm that it is not 1 and 9, but 1 and 5.

[Translation]

**Hon. Peter Van Loan:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, it is 1 and 5.

[English]

**The Speaker:** Does the hon. government House leader 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)

#### Routine Proceedings

#### PETITIONS

##### GENDER PARITY

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present three petitions.

The first petition is from a group of folks in my riding of South Shore—St. Margaret's and from people across Nova Scotia requesting that the Government of Canada establish rules so that under no circumstances shall an individual or group of individuals' right to equal treatment based on gender, something they are born with, be compromised by another individual or group of individuals' interpretation of a religion, a personal choice, and that no public funds be provided to any facility that provides for gender-based discrimination.

This petition came about when a Muslim man joined a co-ed martial arts class and demanded that the participants be separated into men's and women's groups, based on his interpretation of religion.

##### CANADA POST

**Mr. Gerald Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, the other two petitions deal with rural mail delivery. The petitioners ask that rural mail delivery continue in Nova Scotia.

##### LABELLING OF ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES

**Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions signed by Canadians from across southern Ontario.

First, the petitioners call on the Minister of Health to label alcohol containers, advising that there is no safe amount of alcohol to drink during pregnancy, and that consuming alcohol during pregnancy may cause brain damage to a developing child.

##### VETERANS AFFAIRS

**Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in the second petition, the petitioners call on the government to restore funding for and to reopen Veterans Affairs Canada offices.

##### AGRICULTURE

**Mr. John Rafferty (Thunder Bay—Rainy River, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the last petition calls on the government to enshrine in legislation the inalienable right of farmers and other Canadians to save, reuse, select, exchange, and sell seeds.

##### ABORTION

**Mr. Jim Hillyer (Lethbridge, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, this petition calls on Parliament to respond to Canada's Supreme Court, which says that we have a responsibility to enact abortion legislation. Therefore, the petitioners call upon us to speedily enact legislation that restricts abortion to the greatest extent possible. The petitioners are mostly from my riding in southern Alberta.

● (1515)

##### MINING INDUSTRY

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am presenting two petitions today.

*Routine Proceedings*

The first petition is from members of the St. Kevin's parish in my home riding of Welland. It talks about the creation of a mechanism for a legislative extractive sector ombudsman in Canada with the capacity to look at complaints be received from abroad where our extractive industries go. The petitioners are looking to see that this be enacted in legislation.

## GENETICALLY MODIFIED ALFALFA

**Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, in the second petition, the petitioners call upon the government to enact a moratorium on GM alfalfa. As we know, alfalfa simply spreads, and GM alfalfa would contaminate other alfalfa fields where GM is not warranted or welcome, and would indeed do great damage to organic crops across the country.

## THE ENVIRONMENT

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present.

The first is a Canadian interfaith call for leadership and action on climate change. Those who signed the petition are calling for collective action by Canada to sign and implement a binding international agreement, replacing the Kyoto protocol and committing nations to reduce carbon emissions and setting fair and clear targets to ensure that global average temperatures stay below a 2°C increase from pre-industrial levels.

## MINING INDUSTRY

**Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls for the creation of a legislated ombudsman mechanism for responsible mining. The signatories are calling for more corporate social responsibility, and they want this ombudsman to be able to receive and investigate complaints and to assess compliance with corporate accountability standards based on international labour, environmental, and human rights norms.

## RAIL TRANSPORTATION

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to table a variety of petitions.

The first petition is about the government cutting the subsidy to the Algoma Central Railway line. The petitioners are concerned about the impact this will have on their communities and businesses. They ask the federal government to reinstate some funding and allow the ACR to operate.

## VOLUNTEERISM

**Mrs. Carol Hughes (Algoma—Manitoulin—Kapuskasing, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the next petition calls on the Government of Canada to recognize service by issuing a new Canadian volunteer service medal, designated the "Governor General's volunteer service medal". It would be for volunteer service by Canadians in the regular and reserve military force and cadet corps support staff who are not eligible for other medals of this kind, and who have completed 365 days of uninterrupted honourable duty in the—

**The Speaker:** Order, please. There are still several members rising to present petitions and we have only gone through a small number in about half the time available for petitions.

Does the hon. member have another petition? No. Okay, we will move on, but I would urge members to provide just a very brief summary and not to read or offer comment on the petitions.

The hon. member for Beaches—East York.

## PUBLIC TRANSIT

**Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have two petitions to present today. Briefly, the first petition calls upon the Government of Canada to enact a national public transit strategy that would provide a permanent investment plan to support public transit and establish federal funding mechanisms for public transit.

## CANADA POST

**Mr. Matthew Kellway (Beaches—East York, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition deals with the plans to end door-to-door delivery of our mail service. The petitioners call upon the Government of Canada to reject Canada Post's plan to cut mail service and increase prices, and instead to explore other options for modernizing our postal delivery system.

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have two different petitions on Canada Post from Castlegar, Nelson, Slocan Valley and East Kootenay, one calling on the Government of Canada to reverse cuts to services by Canada Post, and the other instructing Canada Post to halt its plan to downsize and downgrade public post offices.

● (1520)

## PROPORTIONAL REPRESENTATION

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the next petition is from the Nelson area calling for amendment of the Canada Elections Act to introduce a suitable system of proportional representation after public consultation.

## HEALTH OF ANIMALS AND MEAT INSPECTION

**Mr. Alex Atamanenko (British Columbia Southern Interior, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the last but not least petition is in support of my Bill C-322 to prohibit the importation and exportation of horses for slaughter for human consumption, as well as horse meat products for human consumption.



## CANADA POST

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to present two petitions signed by thousands of Canadians across the country, including my riding. The first is from Canadians concerned about cuts to Canada Post, including the elimination of door-to-door service, the loss of up to 8,000 jobs, and significant increases to postage fees. They call on the Government of Canada to reverse these cuts and to look for ways to innovate in areas such as postal banking.

## SHARK FINNING

**Mr. Fin Donnelly (New Westminster—Coquitlam, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, the second petition calls on the Government of Canada to immediately legislate a ban on the importation of shark fins into Canada.

[*Translation*]

## GATINEAU PARK

**Mr. Mathieu Ravignat (Pontiac, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I have the privilege and honour to present this petition on behalf of Canadians who want to see the House of Commons pass legislation that would provide Gatineau Park with the necessary legal protection to ensure its preservation for future generations.

## MINING INDUSTRY

**Mr. Sylvain Chicoine (Châteauguay—Saint-Constant, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, today I am presenting a petition on behalf of dozens of my constituents.

They are calling on the Government of Canada to create an extractive sector ombudsman, which would allow people with concerns about Canadian mining activities to file complaints. The ombudsman could receive and analyze those complaints and assess compliance with international social responsibility standards regarding labour, the environment and human rights.

[*English*]

## CANADA POST

**Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I present a petition signed by my constituents and people from all over Toronto asking the government to reject Canada Post's plan to reduce services, and calling on it to explore other options by updating Canada Post's business plan and returning Canada Post to its function as 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

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ask that all notices of motions for the production of papers be allowed to stand.

**The Speaker:** Is that agreed?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[*English*]

## BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

## OPPOSITION MOTION—DISCLOSURE OF MEMBERS' TRAVEL AND HOSPITALITY EXPENSES

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.)** moved:

That the House recognize the importance of transparency and accountability in the expenditure of taxpayers' money and also recognize that the majority of parties have already begun disclosing the travel and hospitality expenses of their Members; and therefore call on the Board of Internal Economy to instruct the non-partisan professional administrative staff of the House of Commons to begin posting all travel expenses incurred under the travel point system as well as hospitality expenses of Members to the Parliament of Canada website in a manner similar to the guidelines used by the government for proactive disclosure of ministerial expenses.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Winnipeg North for the most enthusiastic welcome to the House that I have seen in years. I have to say that I am very grateful to him.

I would also like to congratulate and thank my colleague from Newfoundland and Labrador, from the beautiful riding of Avalon, for seconding this motion.

Sunshine is the ultimate disinfectant, as many people will say. In this particular case, I do believe that sunshine, meaning transparency, would make us more accountable to the public. We want to be more accountable to the public for a very good reason, which is that the money we spend here is not our money, but belongs to the Canadian public, to the taxpayers of this country.

By accepting this motion, we would be saying to the country that we are ready, willing, and able to report to the Canadian public as to how its tax dollars are being spent, especially in the execution of what we do as members of Parliament and in general as parliamentarians.

Before addressing the motion at hand, I want to back up for a few moments to talk about what we as a party have done over the past while.

The Liberal Party's open Parliament proposals were announced by our leader, the member for Papineau, on June 5, 2013. The following are the main points of what we consider to be an open Parliament.

First would be to require that members of Parliament and senators proactively disclose travel hospitality expenses made by them and their staff.

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Second would be to introduce legislation to make meetings of the Board of Internal Economy of the House of Commons open and transparent to the public. The ability of the committee to go in camera where necessary, for example on sensitive HR matters, will remain but not as is currently the case, that is, by default. The Senate Board of Internal Economy is already public.

Third would be to create a common quarterly and more detailed online expense report—which, of course, we can see at liberal.ca—for each member. This is for spending by members of Parliament and the Senate. It is also more easily accessed and usable by the public from the homepage of the Parliament of Canada website.

Fourth would be for the House to work with the Auditor General to develop mandatory performance audits of the House of Commons and Senate administration every three years, as well as public guidelines under which the Auditor General would be called in to perform more detailed audits of parliamentary spending.

Also, the leader of the Liberal Party introduced a private member's bill at about the same time, which is on notice in the House of Commons. The bill contains three main points. It would amend the Parliament of Canada Act to ensure that the Board of Internal Economy's meetings were open to the public by law. The bill would only allow the Board of Internal Economy to meet behind closed doors if the subject matter being discussed were related to security, staff relations or tenders, with the unanimous consent of members present.

These are our initiatives. They would entail an open Parliament where we could go to our websites and find out what we had been spending on travel and hospitality. It is similar to what is now being done by ministers of the crown, of course, as brought in by the former Liberal government under Paul Martin.

I would like to once again put forward in the House a detailed understanding of why we do this.

Let us look at the motion, which begins with “That the House recognize”. Most members of this House, but not all, already recognize this. However, we need to get unanimity to make sure that everyone is onboard with what we are doing.

The motion is as follows:

That the House recognize the importance of transparency and accountability in the expenditure of taxpayers' money and also recognize that the majority of parties have already begun disclosing...call on the Board of Internal Economy to instruct the non-partisan professional administrative staff of the House of Commons to begin posting all travel expenses incurred under the travel point system....

I will stop here for a moment on the travel point system, as many members accumulate a certain number of points to come to Ottawa, regardless of the price of individual tickets. I come from central Newfoundland, and it can be an expensive endeavour to get here even at the best of times. For others, it is not as expensive. Therefore, the point system is in place, but it has to be transparent. We have to show Canadians how we spend their money so that we can effectively do our jobs.

The motion concludes with:

...as well as hospitality expenses of Members to the Parliament of Canada website in a manner similar to the guidelines used by the government for proactive disclosure of ministerial expenses.

● (1525)

We hope that all members of the House will practise what Liberals call a “new way of transparency” that allows Canadians to go online to see what their member of Parliament or other members within the House spend their taxpayers' money on. It is their money. I certainly believe that they have a right to see how we spend it. An investor in a company has the same right. If people readily give their money to financial advisors, they certainly have the right to find out how those advisors are spending or investing their money, in many cases.

Obviously, the very reason, the root cause of that, is that it is their money and they entrust those people to do that. In a similar vein, the people of this country are investing in good governance and, therefore, it is their money being invested and we, as parliamentarians, as their direct representatives, must come clean and show them what we are spending it on.

We are tasking the non-partisan professional administrative staff at the House of Commons with the responsibility to post all travel expenses incurred under the travel points system, as well as hospitality expenses, and if we use the proactive disclosure model, we can strengthen transparency and accountability in the House of Commons. That is what this motion is about today.

Canadians' faith in public office holders in politics has been seriously shaken recently by the ethics scandal rooted in a \$90,000 payment by the Prime Minister's chief of staff to a sitting legislator and the continued secrecy of the Conservatives. There requires a lot more sunshine that we are not seeing cast upon a situation that to say is tawdry is putting it lightly. There is a great deal of suspicion that has been caused by that particular incident, and Canadians are now saying they demand better of their direct representatives, and this is what this motion would do. It would demand that much better, to which we have to answer the call and say to Canadians, “We know what you are saying and we have to practise it”. We preach it, but we have to practise it. Again I say, we preach but we have to practise.

That is why in June, as I mentioned earlier, the leader of the Liberal Party introduced an open parliament plan, which would do the following: require proactive disclosure of travel and hospitality expenses; open up meetings of the secretive House of Commons Board of Internal Economy; ensure that quarterly online expense reports are easily accessible by Canadians; and, of course, the final point, which is very important, work with the Auditor General to develop public guidelines to ensure proper spending in Parliament.

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I will even admit to the House right now that for several years, the expenses that I incur in my office are in a binder and sit in my office. Any constituent of mine can come in and look at them. I will hand them over. Constituents can go through them as much as they please and if they have any questions, I am more than happy to entertain those questions. That is an essential part of being a public servant. If one enters the life of public service, this is what one has to do. It is not something provided as a favour to the public. It is something required as a responsible measure of public representation. That is what we must do. That is what we must endeavour to do and improve upon each and every time we enter the House, each and every time we are elected to represent our particular constituencies, all 308 of them, soon to be 338.

As I mentioned earlier, for all members of the House right now, people can go online and get the general categories of expenses through the official channels, but what Liberals would like to do, and what we did as a party, was to go a step further and allow people to find out the nature of the expenses, especially when it comes to travel and hospitality. Again, that is modelled after what was done for ministers' expenses back in the early 2000s under the Paul Martin government.

We thought that was the model to use and, therefore, we extended it to the MPs who sit in the House, certainly from a party perspective on this side of the House. Some parties have followed suit; other parties have not. Nonetheless, we hope over the next little while, we will find that, with proactive disclosure—we cannot just force MPs to do this. Nobody should be forced to do this. We want MPs to be inspired to allow them to expose to Canadians how they are spending their money.

• (1530)

There are so many things we can improve upon. We, as a party, have not improved them all, but we are striving to do so. We were the first to do so, because we think that the most responsible thing we can do is to lead by example. If as parents we behave in such a way in front of our children, to provide the ultimate example of how we would like them to behave, we should certainly take our own advice and lead by example as representatives here in the House.

People trust us to manage their money and make the decisions that they feel are right for the betterment of this country in general, not just in their riding.

I understand it when people say that we need to move along and do this as a group. We have. Proactive disclosure is just that. It is proactive in that it puts us out there, to say we need to move beyond what is already required of us, to lead by example. That, in and of itself, is probably a good measure of good governance.

We should not just sit here and be reactive to the latest scandal that appears in 140 characters or less on Twitter. We should not only respond to whatever scandal comes up in breaking news on cable news channels or any other type of media. If we become reactive only to what the people require, we will find ourselves far behind where the people want us to be, and we will not measure up. That is not a question of losing elections. It is just a question of providing good representation.

By and large, people feel that expenses need to be exposed to the public, which is why they ask for it. That is why these news items garner a lot of attention. It gives the appearance of concealing something that was done wrong.

Pardon the example, but there is an old expression that says we can dress up a pig as much as we want, but it is still a pig at the end of the day. Therein lies the analogy of some of the issues that take place. We go above and beyond the call of duty to make it look like something else, when it in fact sits exactly as it stands.

More often than not, we tend to undermine the intelligence of the average citizen of this country. Let us not kid ourselves. I am not casting aspersions upon any particular issue. I am talking about issues in general that garner a lot of negative reactions from the public because, essentially, it comes down to one nugget of emotion for the people, which is how stupid do we think they are? That is pretty much where we should be going, to say that we do not think that they are that stupid or naive. We do not want to conceal anything from them because we do not think that they will understand it, or that we should wait until the other person acts or until the right machinery is in place so that it gets done. We should be proactive.

It is kind of ironic that we use proactive disclosure. Disclosure should be something that is natural for any person who is a representative of the people. It is odd that we call it proactive, but it is proactive because we are doing it. There is an array of politicians and an array of representatives like us who are not.

The rule states that we do not have to go this far, which is why we said that it is not good enough. Just because the rule says we do not have to go that far does not mean that we do not have to step in the direction that we feel is right and that Canadians feel is right.

That is why I am very happy to be moving this motion today. I certainly believe that this is a step in the right direction. This is disclosure. This is the sunshine that will prove to be the ultimate disinfectant.

• (1535)

Is it the final word? Is that it? Is that all we need to do? No, there are always improvements. We have to make sure it is right. That should not stop us from doing the right thing.

Proactive disclosure is one of the those things that is inspiring to many people across this country. I hope that some day, every parliamentarian, every member of the House of Commons, will partake in this.

I look at some who have done it. My colleague right here did it, despite many obstacles. He did it several years ago. Good on him for doing it. He was re-elected for the right reasons, not because voters disliked someone else but because he did the right thing. A lot of people in his riding recognized that.

By tasking the non-partisan professional administrative staff of the House of Commons with the responsibility to post all travel expenses incurred under the travel point system, as well as hospitality expenses, using the proactive disclosure model, we hope this model will serve the purpose to formalize what we should be doing in the future.

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Canadians have a right to know how their money is being spent. Members should not just take my word for it. I have received several emails over the past six months from the average citizen, saying just that. I repeat: Canadians have a right to know how their money is being spent. That comment was sent to me some time ago in an email. I thought, who are we, as the direct representatives, to counter that point? It certainly would not make a lot of sense.

It has been nearly a year since our leader announced that the Liberals would raise the bar on openness and transparency by proactively disclosing travel and hospitality expenses, and yet it still not being performed in a standardized way, for all parties, by the House of Commons.

We hope that this motion and this debate today will not so much lecture parties to do this, although it may come to that, as inspire all members of Parliament to do this. We want a uniform, standardized system that applies to all members of Parliament. We want to see all expenses in one spot, in a format that is easy to find and easy to understand.

That is why on liberal.ca, people can go directly to their member of Parliament and see these proactive disclosure measures on travel and hospitality. They can see proactive disclosure, a detailed model of disclosure, designed and implemented.

As I mentioned earlier, former Prime Minister Paul Martin, in 2003, brought in this model to be adhered to by the ministers of the day, and they were his own ministers. He did not require all parliamentarians to adhere to it, just his own ministers. It was a gutsy thing to do in that situation, but he did it. We think that should serve as a model for all MPs in this House, despite party representations or independence.

I believe that at the end of the day, people would ultimately agree this is the sunshine that acts as a disinfectant, which they will be happy to see because it will show how we are doing our jobs with their tax dollars. How effectively we are doing our jobs will be seen on election day.

The policies of defence, justice, free trade, crime, and others can be judged, but now people can also judge their representative on how they personally spend taxpayers' money. That should be a natural extension of what we are as members of Parliament.

Everybody in the House likes to preach about being open and transparent. I encourage all members of the House to now practise what they preach.

● (1540)

[Translation]

**Mr. Dan Albas (Parliamentary Secretary to the President of the Treasury Board, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I want to express my strong support for this motion. My question for the member across the way concerns what the motion says about disclosing expenses. It says that this will reflect the guidelines used by the government for proactive disclosure of ministerial expenses.

Does my colleague interpret that to mean a guideline to disclose the bare minimum, as in the previous Liberal system, or does he foresee a more robust system, like the Conservative system, which

includes all the expenses for the staff and designated travellers and all the elements on the events list?

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Before I go to the hon. member, I would like to remind all hon. members to direct their comments to the Chair rather than directly to their colleague.

The hon. member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor.

**Mr. Scott Simms:** Mr. Speaker, I repeat, "...as hospitality expenses of Members to the Parliament of Canada website in a manner similar to the guidelines used by the government...". We want that more robust system, yes.

[Translation]

**Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank my colleague from Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor for his speech and his motion.

I would like to know whether it was his intention to support our amendment regarding, among others, a review by the Auditor General. What are the Liberals' intentions with regard to the NDP's amendments?

● (1545)

[English]

**Mr. Scott Simms:** Mr. Speaker, I am assuming the member is talking about the amendment that was earlier handed to me personally. There is no amendment on the floor right now. I would suggest she should probably hand that in first to see if it is in order before she gets my opinion. Nonetheless, if it is what I think it is, things look pretty good. However, she may want to pose an amendment.

**Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague for his motion, as it supports the ongoing Conservative efforts to improve transparency and accountability, and I do commend the Liberal Party and the member.

We believe in the effort to improve MP reporting. There have been extensive improvements made in that area especially since 2009-10. Most recently, in October of last year, the all-party Board of Internal Economy announced some further details of the quarterly reporting that will become available in 2014-15, which is about to begin.

Based on the motion, can we presume the Liberals will be supporting us in our ongoing efforts to improve MP expense reporting? Could he also comment on the recent changes at the Board of Internal Economy?

*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Scott Simms:** Mr. Speaker, I am not disparaging in any way by saying this, but we came to the point in proactive disclosure where we thought we had to take that step to go even further than what was already being practised. We decided at the time that we needed to step forward, and we did; so all the measures that are currently in place, yes, of course we support them. Do they need to be strengthened? Yes, of course they do. Do we support that? Yes, of course we do, which is why we made the step to be proactive in what we were doing, to be based on the expenses that are already out there and transparent for ministers, much as we did back in 2003.

I appreciate the comments from my hon. colleague. He obviously likes to practise what he preaches, and hopefully in the future he will practise it even more, to make it an even better system.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, in June of last year when the whole issue of proactive disclosure really came to the House, the leader of the Liberal Party at that time sought unanimous support of the House of Commons. We did not achieve it back then, but we continued to push it.

It is nice that we have the Conservatives somewhat onside, and I appreciate the fact that they are going to be supporting the motion. However, it is important to recognize that the whole issue of leadership on this issue has come from the leader of the Liberal Party of Canada.

We need to recognize that, at the end of the day, we want to see all members of all political entities in the House support the initiative of proactive disclosure. Maybe the member could point out from his perspective how important it is that all members of the House get behind the resolution that has been presented by my colleague.

**Mr. Scott Simms:** Mr. Speaker, I would like to compliment the hon. member for Winnipeg North for all the hard work he is doing in his riding, which is pretty standard form, or should be standard. The abilities of the gentleman from Winnipeg North astound me each and every day. He is unbelievable. I want to highlight the situation. That man spends tireless hours in the House, to the point where I am inspired on a daily basis. It is unbelievable. If it were any better, I could retire and become that man's agent or his publicist. Members may laugh, but it is true. They know he spends more time here than most people I have seen in ages. He is Winnipeg North. It is as simple as that.

The member did bring up a good point with respect to proactive disclosure. Let us look at the very essence of what this is. It means members will be judged as members of Parliament, and they will be judged on policy and voting. There is one thing Canadians cannot get to judge them on, and that is their expenses in executing their job. With this motion they could. We are getting closer. We are not perfect, but we are getting closer to where we should be on proactive disclosure.

• (1550)

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I congratulate the member for bringing forward the motion, which we will be supporting as well.

In response to a question from my colleague around the issue of giving the Auditor General a clear legislative mandate to oversee and audit the spending of the House of Commons, the NDP has been pushing for this for some time. I understand from the member that he

is favourable to that and that the Liberals will be accepting changes and modifications to include the Auditor General as part of that. The member and I agree completely on that. Canadians assume the Auditor General already has jurisdiction, and they would be quite surprised to learn that the Auditor General does not.

I wonder if the member could clarify what he is saying. Does he support the Auditor General being called upon to oversee and verify these expenses?

**Mr. Scott Simms:** Mr. Speaker, am I to understand that there is an amendment coming forward? I get that feeling, but I am not quite sure. It is not out there yet. I am not quite sure what this is. I am not sure if it can be accepted by the House.

Basically I am saying all of this because I want to leave that man in suspense. Why not? I want to leave him in suspense because we practise what we preach. I do not think the NDP does.

**An hon. member:** Who does not disclose it?

**Mr. Scott Simms:** Mr. Speaker, can I go online and get the NDP expenses?

**An hon. member:** No. Not the NDP.

**Mr. Scott Simms:** Mr. Speaker, I cannot. Is that correct? I was wondering if each member of the NDP—

**Some hon. members:** Oh, oh!

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** I would ask hon. members of the Liberal caucus to be quiet, so their colleague can continue.

**Mr. Scott Simms:** See how open we are to accepting criticism, Mr. Speaker. That is just the type of party we are. We are open.

If this is the ultimate way the NDP wants to behave by disclosing its expenses and everything else, why has it not been done? I cannot go on the NDP website and find expenses. I do not quite understand. I think there may be something afoot here. I hope the amendment will finally put an end to this, whereby every member of the House of Commons would tell Canadians what they spend in executing their job.

**Hon. John Duncan (Minister of State and Chief Government Whip, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to point out that what we have in front of us today is an allotted day opposition motion from the Liberal Party of Canada. I would like to actually thank the member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor for his motion, because moving toward increased transparency and accountability is something our Conservative government has strongly supported and continues to support. Our government has a solid track record of achievement when it comes to improving the transparency of all aspects of government operations, including contracts, tenders, and government records.

I think it is easy to forget how far we have come since 2006. Today, we take for granted all the protections we now have in place as a result of our initiatives, but we should not lose sight of what inspired us to make these changes in the first place.

*Business of Supply*

We had a Liberal government that was caught with both hands in the cookie jar. There were mysterious and lucrative contracts with Liberal-friendly ad agencies, with little or no work to show for them. There was misappropriation of taxpayer money, kickback schemes, and money changing hands in brown envelopes. As the Gomery commission poked at the rot, a picture began to emerge of a system tailored to benefit the Liberals and their friends. There was a systemic lack of accountability and oversight. There were insufficient guidelines governing appointments, advertising, and behaviour of ministers and their staff.

With all this in mind, our first order of business when we formed government was to enact the Federal Accountability Act, the toughest accountability legislation in the history of Canada. This was a sweeping initiative, designed to close the loopholes the previous government had used to enrich itself and its friends.

For example, the Federal Accountability Act and action plan, among other things, reformed the financing of political parties; cleaned up the procurement of government contracts; cleaned up government polling and advertising; provided real protection for whistleblowers; strengthened access to information legislation; strengthened the power of the Auditor General; strengthened auditing and accountability within federal departments; strengthened the role of the Ethics Commissioner; and toughened the lobbyists registration act.

In all, our Federal Accountability Act and action plan made substantive changes to 45 federal statutes and amended more than 100 others, which touched virtually every part of government. This was a significant achievement.

However, since then, our government has continued with its unprecedented work on strengthening the transparency and accountability of our public institutions. For example, we are working to ensure that federal departments post more information on contracts, including those for professional services and management consultants and those awarded to former public servants.

We have also taken significant steps to make important information more accessible than ever to the public. For example, government procurement information can now be found on a single website called Buyandsell.gc.ca, which is free of charge and does not require registration.

In 2012, departments began publishing quarterly financial reports, which are accessible through the open data portal, which can be found at data.gc.ca. Summaries of completed access to information program requests can now be searched online through this open data portal.

We have also unveiled a searchable expenditure database, which for the first time provides citizens and parliamentarians with easy access and analysis of all government spending.

We continue to strive to make information more accessible to Canadians.

• (1555)

Though this government released a record number of materials through access to information requests in 2012-13, which was a 27% increase over the previous year, we still had one of the fastest

turnaround rates on record for processing access to information requests. There is no question that this is a record of achievement. It is a record that shows relentless progress toward increased transparency and accountability. It is a record that shows necessary respect for the right of taxpayers to see where their money is going.

It takes great effort to get to where we are today, and it will require great effort to continue our progress. It has required an investment of time and political will to continue moving it forward. We have done it because it was the right thing to do.

We understand that the same information that helps Canadians understand their government can also be twisted and mischaracterized by our political opponents, which might explain why previous governments did not enact the changes we have enacted and why we have had so much ground to cover as we work to improve transparency and accountability in government. However, that still has not deterred us. We will continue to move forward, knowing that we are building a system that makes it harder for people to misuse government resources for personal gain.

Our determination ultimately arises out of a respect for taxpayers that underpins our party. We are not afraid to set higher standards for ourselves. We do not try to fool Canadians with grand schemes that distract the eye and empty the wallet but accomplish nothing. We try to develop practical solutions to real problems that respect the bottom line. We have not governed to enrich ourselves but to build a better, stronger Canada. We have shown unprecedented leadership in transparency and accountability and are very proud of our accomplishments in this regard.

Today I would like to focus on specific actions Conservative parliamentarians have taken to apply these principles in their personal affairs, specifically by improving transparency and accountability for travel and hospitality expenses.

The motion in question calls for the travel and hospitality expenses of members of Parliament to be reported in a manner similar to the government's proactive disclosure guidelines for ministerial expenses. I am proud to say that Conservative members of Parliament have gone further down this road than anyone.

We knew that Canadians were concerned about expenses both here and in the other place, and we sought a way to provide them the assurance they need with respect to how their money is being used. We pushed for improved reporting that would provide more details for all MPs, particularly with respect to travel and hospitality, but we were concerned about the time frame required to achieve this within the formal reporting mechanisms that apply to all members. Rather than wait, we developed our own system for tracking travel and hospitality expenses.

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We chose to base our own reporting system on that used for proactive disclosure under the ministerial model for travel and hospitality expenses. The model is adapted to fit MP expenses and is driven by two primary principles. The first is that if a travel or hospitality expense is paid for by the taxpayer, it should be reported within our system. Second, the most important relationship, when it comes to reporting expenses, is between the member and his or her constituents.

Although our Liberal colleagues also developed a reporting system, there are a number of differences in our respective approaches. It is impossible to compare principles with the NDP, since it has no reporting system at all. Instead of making an honest effort to require their members to improve their transparency, they offer only excuses and deflection.

A careful look at proactive disclosure by ministerial offices reveals comprehensive accounting of travel and hospitality expenses, not just by ministers but also by their political staff.

● (1600)

Conservatives are the only party currently posting complete travel and hospitality expenses for staff as well as for parliamentarians. MPs' staff do important work for our constituents and are in a position of trust. It is no less important for us to account for travel and hospitality expenses for our staff. Just as ministerial staff have to disclose all travel expenses charged to the taxpayers, Conservative MPs also provide proactive disclosure on all staff travel expenses.

My Liberal colleagues go partway in this regard in that they appear to report staff travel when it takes place between Ottawa and the riding, but there is no sign of travel expenses incurred within the riding. This is at best a half-measure, but to be sure, and in fairness, it is a vast improvement over the complete lack of measures exhibited by the NDP.

Another apparent difference between the Conservative and Liberal systems is that Conservatives are posting all items charged under the hospitality budget as hospitality expenses. It is not clear if this is the case for the Liberal system, but perhaps they could clarify whether they are posting all hospitality charges or just selected ones.

One thing is clear. There is one party in this place that is not offering details of its hospitality expenses, and that is the NDP. My colleagues in the NDP have decided that they would rather not post any detailed expenses. Not only that, they have tried to disparage our attempts to increase transparency regarding our expenses. They have the gall to wrap their lack of transparency in a cloak of virtue. The NDP members claim that they will not report their travel and hospitality expenses because there is not currently a system that applies to all MPs.

Well, we agree that there should be a system that applies to all MPs. We do not agree that this should stop MPs from taking steps to increase their own transparency. A new system will not appear overnight, so we have taken steps to fill the gap. In the end, while the NDP waits for a system that applies to all MPs, virtually all MPs except the NDP have a system in place.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** April 1, April 1.

**Mr. Blaine Calkins:** The truth hurts.

**Hon. John Duncan:** They are heckling me now, Mr. Speaker.

The NDP members claim that they will not report their expenses because the systems currently used by other parties require self-policing. While we agree that we should work toward a system that is vetted by House administration, we do not agree that this is a barrier to MPs being accountable to their constituents. I have worked hard to ensure that my travel and hospitality reports accurately reflect my expenses, and I believe that my colleagues have done the same.

I wonder why the NDP balks so much at posting its expenses. Is it because it mistrusts its own members so deeply that it would rather post nothing than coax them to do it themselves, or is it because they are worried about what the public might see if their spending were posted? Whatever ideas the NDP offers as a distraction, the fact is that absolutely nothing prevents it from taking immediate steps toward being transparent now.

Currently, MP expenses are closely scrutinized by the non-partisan experts within House administration. The quality of their work, as far as I understand, is not being debated, and the Auditor General has confirmed that the safeguards they have in place are rigorous and effective. This motion, as I understand it, would allow us to explore ways in which we could collect and collate information so that it could be presented in a format similar to ministerial proactive disclosure, which has been widely accepted. This makes sense.

The NDP, on the other hand, would have us do away with the current system entirely. It would have us set up a new system, based on the British system, which, according to evidence provided at procedures and House affairs, functions in a manner very similar to our own system.

● (1605)

The British developed an arm's-length organization, because their system was not working. Setting up their organization cost millions of pounds and took several years and a lot of growing pains. It was worth the cost and effort for them because they were replacing a system that was completely broken. In the end, they ended up with a system of safeguards not remarkably different from what we already have in place. Why would the NDP ask us to spend millions of dollars to end up no further ahead?

I am proud of our government's record on transparency and accountability and can confidently state that we will continue to lead on this front. Since this motion is consistent with the direction we have already taken and efforts already under way, thanks to Conservative leadership, I have no problem supporting it. In fact, I move:

That the motion be amended by adding immediately after the word "posting", the following words, " , on April 1, 2014."

*Business of Supply*

•(1610)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** In these cases, the mover of the initial order of business must agree to the amendment. Does the hon. member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor accept the amendment as moved by the Chief Government Whip?

**Mr. Scott Simms:** Yes, Mr. Speaker.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** It is accepted and in order.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster.

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, it is unfortunate that the trend on the Conservative side has been to pull what we call a Mississauga—Streetsville. In other words, they invent things that really are not true. The member knows full well that in my case, for eight years now, I have been having my direct website connected with my verified complete expenses, as have all NDP MPs. It is the only caucus in which all MPs are directly tied in to House of Commons disclosure. The member knows this.

What is curious is that he neglected to mention the number of Conservatives who have refused to participate in the partial and unverified disclosure the Conservatives were doing last December. In fact, a rough count, and journalists are looking into this now, shows that almost a third of the House of Commons caucus, and of course many more Conservative senators, given all the scandals they are embroiled in, are not even part of this partial voluntary scheme the Conservatives cooked up to try to put a little smoke and mirrors around expense disclosure.

I am going to ask the member a question. We are on television, so he has to give an honest answer. Does he realize just how many members of his caucus do not even subscribe to the partial smoke and mirrors disclosure the Conservatives put forward? Can he tell the House how many Conservative members are not even engaged in the partial disclosure from last December?

**Hon. John Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, I actually take great umbrage at what the member from British Columbia just stated. First, I do not need a television camera on me to tell the truth. Second, yes, I am well aware of each and every one of the Conservative members who has posted or not posted. The current posting is 100% of Conservative members of Parliament and 100% of Conservative senators. It is auditable. It is true. I do not know anything you can do, other than apologize for being so blatantly wrong and accusatory.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** I would again remind all hon. members to direct their comments to the Chair rather than directly to their colleagues.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Winnipeg North.

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is encouraging to see that the Conservatives have moved in this direction. Liberals appreciate the support. The amendment to bring it forward to April 1 is actually encouraging. This is something Liberals have been advocating for months now and is something we believe in. Proactive disclosure is a great way to ensure that there is more transparency. It is something the leader of the Liberal Party has been arguing for virtually since he took the leadership of the party.

We give credit where credit is due and acknowledge and appreciate the support the Conservatives are giving the Liberal opposition motion.

Does the member feel that the only way we are going to be able to get the NDP to disclose the information we are currently disclosing is through the passage of this motion?

**Hon. John Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, in fact I see the vast majority of this motion to be somewhat redundant, in that we are not going to get the NDP to move until there is no choice but to move. This is a motion.

We have something much more significant, which is direction from the Board of Internal Economy, as of April 1, whereby the House administration will ensure there is disclosure that is very much in parallel with the proactive disclosure we are undertaking at this time.

•(1615)

[*Translation*]

**Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I find this debate counterproductive. The parties are trading accusations.

On this side of the House, the NDP wants to work with the Office of the Auditor General to withdraw from MPs the responsibility to police themselves through the Board of Internal Economy. However, the NDP initiative was thwarted by both the Liberals and the Conservatives.

I am not necessarily opposed to the formula as proposed by the Liberal Party today. However, I would like to know why the two parties in question are not supporting the NDP initiative. My question is for the Conservative Party.

Why does it not support the NDP initiative to ensure greater transparency in reporting by removing from members the responsibility to police themselves through the Board of Internal Economy and giving that oversight responsibility to the Office of the Auditor General?

[*English*]

**Hon. John Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, the procedure and House affairs committee has already studied this subject at great length. The NDP was on this path during those committee hearings and got no support.

As a matter of fact, the Auditor General has stated, as I said in my speech, that the controls and processes in place by the House of Commons administration are extremely robust and more than adequate to fulfill the task. Now, with public disclosure on top of that, from the board, I cannot imagine why we would want to put a very expensive system in place. We do not require that to achieve our mission and goal.



*Business of Supply*

**Mr. Blaine Calkins (Wetaskiwin, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague, the hon. Chief Government Whip, for his excellent presentation in the House of Commons today. I would also like to thank him for his invaluable service, not only as the whip of the great Conservative caucus that we have, but also for the yeoman work he has done at the Board of Internal Economy. I would like to thank him for not only making sure that Canadians can rest assured that honest, hard-working members of Parliament have their expenses go through a rigorous process when it comes to their duties, but also for his leadership in making sure that the Conservative caucus posts its expenses.

I wonder if the Chief Government Whip could further edify something for the folks at home. I know he alluded to it in his previous answer, but I wonder if he could expand a bit more on the audit that was done by the Auditor General in regard to the House of Commons financial services.

Could he also explain why, in his opinion, Conservative members of Parliament and Conservative senators, along with some of the Liberal members, are the only ones who seem to be willing to publicly display items above and beyond what is currently required? Why does he think that the NDP seems to be afraid to do what most Canadians would deem to be appropriate, which is to proactively disclose?

**Hon. John Duncan:** Mr. Speaker, there are many things to say. The first thing that Canadians, and all members of Parliament, would say is that we respect the Office of the Auditor General. We also respect the work of our House administration. There is no need to put them at odds with each other, in any way, shape, or form. What we are proposing and what this motion proposes would not do that.

The NDP always wants to create a wedge. Wherever it can create one, it wants to do that. Whether it is for the greater good or not, that is what it wants to do.

In terms of why the NDP is working so hard to not disclose hospitality and travel expenses proactively, I can only speculate on that. Sometimes we spend more energy and resources avoiding doing something than actually doing it. I have failed to understand its logic in this since about halfway through last year.

• (1620)

**Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am proud to rise in this House and congratulate the Liberal Party. It does not happen very often. I have been here for 10 years, and I have had some difficulty with some of the decisions that the Liberals have taken.

I say this as a former financial administrator, one of the only people in the House who has actually prepared documents for audit. I am well aware that when putting expenses together, we need to ensure three things: that they are uniform, complete, and verified.

That is what we in the NDP have been saying now for years, going back to the very beginning when I was first elected in 2004. I was one of the first, along with a number of my NDP colleagues, to post verified expenses from the House of Commons online. I am proud to say that every single member of the NDP caucus now does the same thing. Their constituents can go online to their MP's website and find out what their MP has been spending. That is very

important. It is a principle that we have continued for years, to ensure that in every case, if they are represented by an NDP MP, that they can go online and get the complete and verified expenses that the NDP MP has been putting forward over the course of the year. We are the only party that does that, and there is a small number of Conservatives who do that.

However, I am congratulating the Liberal Party. Rather than going with the games and partial disclosure that the Liberals were trying over the course of the fall, they have come forward with what has been the NDP position: that we have uniform, complete, and verified expenses.

That is extremely important. People need to be able to compare apples to apples and oranges to oranges. That continues on in the long tradition of NDP financial management. As members know, the annual compendium from the ministry of finance, which federally is certainly not a hotbed of social democrats, has been saying year after year, for 20 years, that NDP governments are the best at balancing budgets and paying down debt. That is a record we are very proud of. We are simply better at doing that than other parties.

We were very proud to see that the Liberal Party has moved toward the NDP position. Now, from the Conservative amendment, we are seeing a convergence on the issue of ensuring that the expenses that Canadians are looking for from their members of Parliament are uniform and complete and verified. That is extremely important. That would mean it would not only be when constituents have an NDP MP that they will be able to go online and find what their MP has been spending. Indeed, from all parties, we will have uniform disclosure, which is verified by the House of Commons. That is extremely important. It will also be complete.

I say that "complete" is important because we have seen partial disclosures. Partial disclosures are toxic to audits. A partial disclosure can be that a member—or in an institution, an individual—can choose to release whatever makes him or her look good. We have certainly seen that, particularly from the Conservative side. I refer to the member for Vancouver Island North, who refused to answer the question that I asked him a few minutes ago.

However, the reality is that when we look through the disclosure of Conservative MPs, a third of its caucus has refused to participate in even the partial disclosure program that the Conservatives have put forward. Of course, many of the Conservative senators have refused as well. That is simply not good enough. Canadians expect better. Canadians demand to see uniform and complete and verified expenses, whether a person is in the Senate, which we believe should be abolished, or in the House of Commons.

We have seen a very good motion from the Liberal Party, which we are going to make even better. At the end of my speech, I will be offering an amendment. My colleague has already expressed some interest in accepting that amendment. He certainly seemed amenable to the Conservative amendment.

*Business of Supply*

The member has done a real service by presenting this motion today in the House that would allow us to move forward, to actually add these elements on or around April 1. That was helpful from the Conservative side, and then, from our side, having the Auditor General mandate to be part of verifying the expenses of MPs.

● (1625)

I will give a bit of history because I think that is important. The history started back in the halcyon days of June 2013. On June 18, the NDP presented a motion. We said that given the importance of having that full disclosure and transparency, we would move to have the procedure and House affairs committee do away with the secretive Board of Internal Economy which now regulates the expenses of MPs.

Members will recall that on June 18, which is an historic date, the other parties agreed. The Conservatives said that maybe it would be good to do away with the secretive Board of Internal Economy. No longer would the expenses and difficulties of MPs be treated in a backroom, but would be policed by MPs themselves. Who would expect MPs to police their own expenses? That is not rocket science to the average Canadian. They all feel it is important to have a system with checks and balances. When we have MPs policing themselves, it does not seem to make a lot of sense.

On June 18, we offered that motion. It was adopted unanimously. Then we took it to the procedure and House affairs committee, and members will recall the unfortunate results.

We had a lot of important testimony. I would contradict the member for Vancouver Island North, who said something a few minutes ago about the Auditor General supporting the idea that the Auditor General not have jurisdiction over the expenses of MPs. I would like to be clear that is completely false. I will quote Sheila Fraser, the former Auditor General, who said, "I think Parliament's auditor should audit Parliament". The current Auditor General came before the procedure and House affairs committee and also reiterated what Sheila Fraser said, that the Auditor General needs to have jurisdiction over the expenses of MPs.

Like most Canadians, members might question what that means: "Does the Auditor General not have jurisdiction now?" That is true. It is a surprise to so many Canadians. We have a secretive Board of Internal Economy that is maintained by the current government. It does not want to see that changed. The Conservatives steadfastly refuse to give the Auditor General that control and oversight over the expenses of MPs.

What is wrong with this picture? Even Conservative voters would say, "Are you kidding me? Do you mean that the Conservatives want to keep all of this in the backroom and want to keep the Auditor General away? That doesn't make any sense". That indeed is the position of the Conservatives. They have a partial expense scheme. We can take out all of their senators and the dozens of MPs who do not get involved—and for anyone who wants to check that out, they can go online and see how many Conservatives are missing from the partial expense scheme—and at the same time, they do not want to involve the Auditor General and do not want to do away with the secretive self-policing of the Board of Internal Economy.

The current Auditor General thought differently when he said, "independent... oversight [of MPs' expenses] would strengthen members' accountability and enhance the public's confidence in the governance mechanisms of the House of Commons."

We have had both past and current auditors general saying very clearly that they want jurisdiction over the expenses of MPs. We have also had the current Auditor General say that we need to have independent oversight.

The procedure and House affairs committee was called upon to look into that study. As a result of the NDP motion that at the time, on June 18, was supported unanimously as I recall, the procedure and House affairs committee heard from a number of witnesses. They provided testimony on what type of independent body could replace the secretive Board of Internal Economy. That secretive self-policing could be replaced by something like what we have in the United Kingdom, an independent parliamentary standards authority, which has independent oversight over the expenses of MPs. It is not self-policing in the United Kingdom; there is independent oversight.

That is a key policy difference between the NDP and the Conservatives. The Conservatives want self-policing of MPs, and the NDP wants to see independent oversight. There could not be a clearer division between those who want to see real accountability and those who do not.

● (1630)

We believe that the Auditor General should have a role, and I will be speaking to that idea in a moment and offering an amendment that I believe my colleague from the Liberal Party would accept. We also believe the Auditor General should be given the ability to look into MPs' expenses, and not on an invitational basis. That is where the Conservatives currently stand their ground. They say that we can invite them in if we all agree. That amounts to self-policing again. We are saying that the Auditor General should have the resources and the ability to go in and check.

I just got an update from our fabulous lobby team. It is always very interesting to see what is happening on the floor of the House of Commons.

We also looked into having the ability for access to information to also cover MPs' expenses, and our report coming out of the procedure and House affairs committee very clearly spoke to this idea. The Information Commissioner has called for it. The Information Commissioner does believe that access to information should also cover Parliament Hill and MPs' offices, with a system of checks and balances in place to preserve confidentiality.

When we are talking about expenditures, we are talking about something that is part of the public domain. We brought forward, after the unanimous support in the House of Commons on June 18, a plan to make MPs' expenses much more accountable and to have full disclosure of them. We had already pushed for the April 1 date that all parties have agreed to, and we are very happy that we will see enhanced disclosure as of April 1. We will start to see this information released on a three-month basis, and that is very important too.

*Business of Supply*

What is most important in that overall framework is that we are talking about uniform, complete, and verified expenses. We are not talking about partial expenses or schemes whereby MPs self-police with no oversight from the Auditor General and can release whatever they choose to release and not release whatever they choose not to release. It has to be complete, it has to be verified, and it has to be uniform so that we can compare one member of Parliament to another. For the most part, members of Parliament work hard and make sure they are justifying their expenses, but if we do not have apples compared to apples, it is difficult for the public to compare and make sure they know what their MP is spending compared to other members of Parliament.

The fact that all NDP MPs put this information right up on their websites as part of the information they send out to their constituents is very important. It is not for show. It is a very practical tool that my constituents have been using for eight years.

For eight years, with my annual disclosures, I have been getting questions asking why I spent a certain amount on something or other. I can answer those questions. They come in from my constituents, because for eight years my constituents have been able to go directly to my website, find my expenses, and find out how much I spent.

This would be happening on a three-month basis, and that is good. It means that every three months we will be responding to the questions that quite legitimately come from our constituents who pay our salaries. That is extremely important.

The enhanced disclosure on April 1 will also increase disclosure and transparency, but neither I nor the NDP caucus believes that is enough. Those three other elements have to be part of the package. I know Conservatives have to be dragged kicking and screaming into more disclosure, but we are saying, and we will continue to say, that the Auditor General needs to have the ability to go in and examine MPs' expenses, as he has requested and as previous Auditors General have requested.

It has to be done in a very clear way, not in a way that would cause the Office of the Auditor General to stop other expense studies it was currently engaged in because of a lack of resources. Under the Conservative government, we have seen the Auditor General's department being cut back severely. That makes it more difficult for that good institution to do an effective job on behalf of taxpayers. We say that the Auditor General needs to be examining the expenses of MPs and that the Auditor General needs to have adequate resources to that.

• (1635)

We are also saying that access to information should apply to Parliament Hill. Since the Information Commissioner has requested it, we think it is an extremely important element to include as part of an overall transparency package.

As well, we are not going to give up on the idea that the secretive and unaccountable Board of Internal Economy should be removed from overseeing MP expenses.

I mentioned the United Kingdom. It has an independent standards authority that is working very well. Another example of independent oversight in Canada is the Government of Manitoba, an NDP

government, which has put in place a commissioner to oversee those expenses.

I think it would be fair to say that if we asked 100 Canadians if MPs should be policing themselves, 99 out of 100 would say, "Gosh, no; there needs to be some kind of independent oversight. We should not have MPs policing themselves on expenses. There has to be independent oversight." That is what 99 out of 100 people would say. The 100th person would probably ask that the question be repeated, and would then probably agree that there should not be self-policing but an independent oversight of MPs' expenses.

That is the package we put forward. It was supported by testimony from the Information Commissioner. It was also supported by testimony from not only the current Auditor General but also from previous auditors general. They said very clearly that they need that jurisdiction, which they currently do not have, over MPs' expenses. It was also reinforced by many other witnesses as well.

Tragically, as members know, we ran into a brick wall after the public support received on June 18 and a great deal of support from across the country. I personally had a number of calls and emails from coast to coast to coast from Canadians saying, "Good on the NDP for presenting the motion. Good on all parties for accepting it." However, I guess the Conservatives were following up on that old adage of forming a committee, a committee being a dead-end road whereby a good idea is taken down into the back streets and quietly strangled. Indeed, that is what happened in this case. Those very good ideas that clearly meet with support from the vast majority of Canadians were strangled in committee.

We presented a dissenting report, circulated widely across the country, in which we called upon the government to look at this issue of the Auditor General. We are not going to give up on the issue of having the Auditor General look over MPs' expenses. We believe strongly and firmly that we need that independent, credible body looking and making sure that MPs' expenses have been properly analyzed.

We do not agree with the self-policing that currently seems to be in vogue on the government side. We honestly believe that the Board of Internal Economy's self-policing of MPs' expenses should be ended. Obviously we would receive a great deal of support on this issue from the public.

Those are the ideas that we continue to put forward. We know the government does not support those ideas, but we think Canadians do. Therefore, I will propose the following motion.

[*Translation*]

I move, seconded by my colleague from Terrebonne—Blainville, that the motion be amended by adding, after the words "ministerial expenses", the following: and call on the Bureau of Internal Economy to invite the Auditor General to audit this disclosure.

*Business of Supply*

• (1640)

[English]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Order. I would remind all members that an amendment to the motion before the House has already been moved. As such, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster is actually proposing a subamendment to that amendment.

I would like to point out to all members that O'Brien and Bosc states on page 534, under the section "Subamendments":

Each subamendment must be strictly relevant to (and not at variance with the sense of) the corresponding amendment and must seek to modify the amendment, and not the original question; it cannot enlarge upon the amendment, introduce new matters foreign to it or differ in substance from the amendment.

On this basis, the proposed subamendment is not in order because it goes beyond the context of the amendment itself.

The hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster is rising on a point of order.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, I think if you consult the table, you will find that it is in order. What may not be in order is the fact that there has been another motion put on the floor. In that case, unanimous consent would be required.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Could the member repeat that logic? I did not catch it the first time.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, you are saying it is not in order because it is out of the scope of the motion. I believe that is incorrect. It is not because it is out of the scope of the motion, but because there is another amendment on the floor.

Could you clarify that for me, please?

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** That is not what I am saying. What I am saying is that a motion was put on the floor by the hon. member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor. Subsequently the Chief Government Whip moved an amendment to that motion, which was in order. There cannot be two amendments to the motion on the floor at the same time.

Consequently, what the hon. member for Burnaby—New Westminster has proposed could only be considered as a subamendment to the amendment, but it fails the test of modifying the content of the amendment itself and is therefore not in order at this time.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, with unanimous consent, it can be considered in order.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The hon. member is correct that this House can do almost anything if it receives unanimous consent.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, in this case, what I will do is again propose, seconded by my colleague from Terrebonne—Blainville, for unanimous consent, that the motion be amended by adding after the words "ministerial expenses" the following: "and call on the Bureau of Internal Economy to invite the Auditor General to audit this disclosure".

I am hoping for unanimous consent for this motion, which would be in order.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** The hon. member is seeking unanimous consent to move this amendment. Does the member have unanimous consent of the House?

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** There is no consent.

Questions and comments, the hon. member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor.

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, that was unfortunate, but I want to go to a question and concern that was brought up earlier to the hon. member. First I offer my apologies that the member did not receive the consent he was looking for.

When it comes to expenses, the member mentioned that if people go online and look at my expenses as the member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, they will see, for the dates October 1 to December 31, how many trips I took in that time period and the cost of each of those trips, as published by the Liberal Party of Canada.

Can I see that on the member's website?

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned earlier in my speech, for the last eight years my expenses have been put online every year. My constituents can actually look at my expenses. In a very proactive way, that is what the NDP has been doing.

Until very recently, other parties were not doing that. Now we are starting to see other parties starting to put their verified expenses online. That is welcome. It is something we all support.

As of April 1, that will be happening every three months. Every three months my constituents will be able to go online and see, with the improved disclosure as of April 1, exactly what I have been spending as an MP.

Again, that is something that most MPs do not do, but every single NDP MP does this. That is the distinction.

People do not have to take my word for it. They can take a few minutes and actually check MPs' websites. They will see who actually provides disclosure of expenses and who does not.

Some may say that it may be found in a party website somewhere. We just do not think that is acceptable. What our constituents need to be able to do is go on our website, which is the website address they get through all of our mailings. For every single NDP MP, people can see the verified expenses from the House of Commons.

That is what Canadians deserve. I hope other parties do the same.

• (1645)

**Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, let me try this again. The hon. member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor made an attempt to get a response but did not get an actual response from the member. He just referred to the fact that anyone could go to his website. He mentioned this before the procedure and House affairs committee of which he was formerly a member and of which I am a member.

*Business of Supply*

I did check his website to verify the accuracy. I can tell members that what is found there is the same link we can find on the parliamentary website of a broad section of categories, but what we cannot find there is a detailed listing of his expenses for his travel or his hospitality. That is not there.

However, if we look at the websites of every member of the Conservative government caucus, that information is there.

I really want to know why he and the other members of the NDP do not seem to want to share this information with Canadians. Our government is very open and transparent about those expenses. The NDP seems to have to be dragged kicking and screaming into disclosure and accountability.

Why is it that the NDP does not want to disclose its expenses, in terms of travel and hospitality, to the Canadian public?

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, I have to admit that I find this really funny. The Conservatives said something that actually was not accurate. Now they are being caught up on it. There are dozens of Conservatives who did not even participate in their partial disclosure scheme, let alone actually have a direct link from their website to their annual House of Commons expenses. Now that they have been caught out on this, they are saying, “My goodness. We are going to try to blame somebody else for the problems that we as Conservative MPs have in refusing disclosure”.

As I mentioned earlier and will say again, and I know the Conservatives do not like this, every single NDP MP has a direct link from his or her annual expenses that are verified through the House of Commons. As of April 1, it will be every three months, and that is wonderful.

However, more importantly, every single NDP MP believes that the Auditor General should be allowed to have jurisdiction over MPs' expenses. We actually believe we should be doing away with that secretive Board of Internal Economy that the Conservatives want to hang on to, to have MPs policing their own expenses.

Every single NDP MP believes in transparency, and we hope, some day, the Conservatives will join us in that.

**Mr. Wayne Marston (Hamilton East—Stoney Creek, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I was in the Hamilton Labour Council and we had our books audited every year. I know the struggle it is for small organizations to follow through on these kinds of things.

However, the House of Commons is not a small organization. We have tremendous resources.

What I would like to ask the member for Burnaby—New Westminster is, are not the Board of Internal Economy, which we have been trying to get rid of and made arm's length, and the procedure and House affairs committee, where the blocking has been, dominated by Conservatives?

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Yes, Mr. Speaker, the member for Hamilton East—Stoney Creek is absolutely right. This is the problem. After a motion was adopted by all parties at the procedure and House affairs committee, the Conservatives said, “We are going to do away with the self-policing”. Once the cameras were shut down and the lights were turned off, they decided to take a completely different stand.

Today, members saw my amendment. We had a bit of a dialogue about it. All that we moved was that the Auditor General be invited to audit the disclosure. Is there nothing more motherhood and apple pie than that: bring in the Auditor General just for this disclosure? The Conservatives spoke strongly against it. They rejected that.

I can just say, shame on them. Shame on them for refusing to have the Auditor General come in and monitor MPs' expenses. Shame on them to have to answer to their constituents.

● (1650)

**Ms. Yvonne Jones (Labrador, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I certainly want to recognize my colleague, the member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, in bringing forward this particular motion.

I listened to the NDP speak to this, and I want to put something out for the public because the NDP is leaving a misconception about members of Parliament; that is, we are not adequate to handle a lot of our responsibilities, one being the internal economy commission.

When we talk about MPs policing themselves, it is a false conception. We know that there is a financial arm of government. I know that every time I put a claim in, I get phone calls and emails to my office. I know there are people who work within the parliamentary system who look at the financial piece of it.

However, I also want to say this: I served on the internal economy commission in Newfoundland and Labrador for six years. I did so when the auditor general was auditing all claims for members, and so I do not object to what the member is proposing.

However, I would like for him to put the proper message out there to the people of this country; that MPs just do not have an open chequebook to do exactly what they want.

**Mr. Peter Julian:** Mr. Speaker, I like the member for Labrador, although the reality is that most Canadians believe oversight comes from some body other than MPs themselves. The Board of Internal Economy is secretive, and it is MPs policing themselves.

We put forward a motion on June 18 and Liberals and Conservatives voted for it. It passed unanimously. Obviously, Liberals and Conservatives at that time agreed with us and the vast majority of Canadians that we cannot have a self-policing system and have the same legitimacy, no matter how good people are.

I mentioned earlier in my speech that MPs are generally very good at managing their own budgets, but the reality is that self-policing is not a go. That is why the Liberals and the Conservatives voted for the NDP motion. We are just asking them to follow through and keep their commitment of June 18. We are asking them to vote for NDP motions. Let us do away with self-policing and bring in the Auditor General.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Before we resume debate, it is my duty pursuant to Standing Order 38 to inform the House that the questions to be raised tonight at the time of adjournment are as follows: the hon. member for Vancouver Kingsway, international trade; the hon. member for Thunder Bay—Superior North, rail transportation.

*Business of Supply*

**Ms. Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to speak to today's motion. I also want to congratulate my colleague the member for Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor for putting the motion forward. This would be an important step forward. I will repeat the text of the motion:

That the House recognize the importance of transparency and accountability in the expenditure of taxpayers' money and also recognize that the majority of parties have already begun disclosing the travel and hospitality expenses of their Members; and therefore call on the Board of Internal Economy to instruct the non-partisan professional administrative staff of the House of Commons to begin posting all travel expenses incurred under the travel point system as well as hospitality expenses of Members to the Parliament of Canada website in a manner similar to the guidelines used by the government for proactive disclosure of ministerial expenses.

Why does that make sense?

•(1655)

[Translation]

Canadians' trust in public office-holders and politicians was seriously eroded in past weeks by the ethics scandal involving the \$90,000 payment by the Prime Minister's chief of staff to a sitting legislator and the holier-than-thou attitude of the Conservatives in power.

[English]

There are a number of reasons to do this next move in transparency and openness. Canadians have a right to know how their money is spent, and there is significant public concern.

Having said that, I want to touch on the remarks that the member for Burnaby—New Westminster has made in his indignation, calling on us to end the self-policing system. I want to reinforce the calm and practical words of the member for Labrador, a new member to the House, who is very experienced in parliament in her home province and who understands very well, as we all do, that this is not a self-policing system and that in fact there are non-partisan House of Commons administrative employees who process all claims and make payments for the bulk of our expenses, ensuring that they comply with the rules on how budgets can be spent.

To leave the impression that this is a self-policing system adds to the damage we are seeing done to the reputation of parliamentarians in the House of Commons, and I hope that the temperature of this kind of indignation can cool down and that all parties can work together in a spirit of co-operation to support the Liberal motion.

Having noted that a non-partisan House of Commons administrative employee will be the one who processes claims according to the rules, and they are very strict, as my colleague from Labrador has mentioned, more can be done. Why do we need to do more? Clearly, there is a democratic deficit in our country and that is leading to a loss of trust in Parliament and in parliamentarians. There are many reasons for that and I will go into some of those later, but an indication of the lack of trust and erosion of trust in our democracy and in our parliamentary system can be found in some quotes that I will provide.

In an address in 2009 by the President and CEO of the Public Policy Forum, David J. Mitchell, he said that according to EKOS, a polling company, "Canadians' trust in government to do what is right has steadily declined by a total of 30% from 1968 to 2006". That is government, not Parliament, but government is part of the whole

institution of our democracy and so that affects the reputation of parliamentarians as well.

Also, according to Mr. Mitchell, who quoted a Gallup poll, confidence in the House of Commons fell 26% from 1979 to 2001, and during that same period, trust in political parties in Canada declined by 17%.

According to Elections Canada studies, there has been a steady increase in negative perceptions of public sector waste, "crookedness", and ethical standards since the 1960s. This is a regrettable decline in confidence in Canada's core democratic systems and institutions.

That is from 2009. How are we doing since then? The Conference Board of Canada recently gave Canada a C and said that we ranked sixth among 16 peer countries and that public confidence in Parliament has declined in most of the peer countries over the last two decades. Therefore, we may be in the middle third of the set of 16 countries; however, confidence in all of those countries has been declining. We know that confidence in the political institutions is crucial for the stability of societies and for the functioning of democracy. Actually, there is research showing that the health of the democracy of a country is directly correlated with the health of its economy; so this ties right into the pocketbooks of Canadians.

In June 2013, *The Globe and Mail* quoted a former deputy minister of the New Brunswick commission on legislative democracy. David McLaughlin noted that trust in Canada's Parliament and MPs was among the lowest of some 26 countries in a polling survey conducted in 2012. Mr. McLaughlin said another survey last spring found a 20-point drop in democratic satisfaction in Canada in 8 years, to just over half of Canadians being satisfied with their democracy.

That is not good enough, and that is a precipitous drop over the period of this Conservative government.

In 2012, AmericasBarometer claimed its research showed that only 17% of Canadians trust Parliament and only 10% trust political parties. These are different numbers, but they are all about trust and confidence in Parliament. Of course, if questions are asked differently, there will be some difference in the results that are being acquired. However, all of this is not good enough.

Frank Graves of EKOS polling, in 2014, noted this in his analysis. "If we wanted a one-sentence summary of what the polls told us about Canadian democracy in 2013, it would be this: We're losing faith". That is what the Canadian public told EKOS pollsters. When asked, "Which of the following choices best reflects your deepest concerns about the future?", the top choice was "Acute decline of our democratic and public institutions".

I have more statistics along that line, but that is enough to really demonstrate that there is a loss of public confidence in our Parliament, in our government, and in our democracy. We know that is the wrong direction. We need to be moving public confidence in the other direction.

*Business of Supply*

When there is a lack of trust in Parliament, there is a lack of trust in our democracy, and then Canadians limit their participation with democracy; so it can become a downward spiral if they are not engaging with the policies, the laws, and the bills. They are then less likely to support them, and those bills and policies are less likely to reflect their input. This is a downward spiral that we cannot afford in our country.

I was born in a country that did not have democracy during the seven years I lived there. That is South Africa. It is a very personal matter for me to be aware of the health of Canadian democracy and to take the responsibility as a member of Parliament, as most of us do, to build the trust and confidence in our democracy. I have seen the kind of society one has when one does not have a democracy that is working and is trusted.

• (1700)

In South Africa recently, we saw the passing away of Nelson Mandela, who was an absolute hero around the world for the work he did to bring democracy to a country that did not have it for so long, and he did it in a way that brought people together, rather than dividing them. In the spirit of the contributions that Mr. Mandela, Madiba, made to the world, I take it as a personal challenge and responsibility to do what I can, and I know that many of my colleagues feel that way as well in the quest for restoring the democracy of our country.

There are reasons why the trust in democracy is eroding. Over the last eight years, there has been some acceleration of that distrust. I would contend that there are deliberate decisions and policies made by the Conservative government that have contributed to that. I need to mention some of them, even though the motion Liberals are putting forward is one that we are hoping will be supported by all parties in a spirit of co-operation.

It is important to note that some of this erosion of trust in our democracy, institutions, Parliament, and government ties into the abuse of the tool called prorogation. When prorogation is used to avoid accountability, that undermines the public's confidence in the institution. When omnibus bills are tabled that include massive public policy changes on a whole range of issues, and closure on those bills is pushed through, so there is not proper understanding and debate in the chamber, then there is an erosion of the confidence of the public in the process of deliberating and debating on changes in policy and legislation.

The public counts on parliamentarians to do work in committees, to scrutinize bills, and to explore and study issues of concern to Canadians, public policy issues, funding issues, issues of injustice. Committees have been counted on to be independent places where parliamentarians can bring their ideas and voice their concerns about the effectiveness of policies and bills being brought forward by the government or private members. Committees are no longer as effective. Much more committee business is done in secret, so there is a lack of transparency and accountability, and the independence of members on the government side has been curtailed, frankly, so that the instructions from the Prime Minister's Office overcome the individuals' possible concerns about what their own government is doing.

Lastly, what I call the unfair elections act is another tool that is undermining the confidence of the public. Our elections are a very critical part of our democracy. They are how parliamentarians are elected. If the process for electing parliamentarians has become less inclusive and more likely to exclude vulnerable voters and Canadians like the disabled, the elderly, the homeless, and low-income earners, then that is less democratic and less fair. When the leader of the Elections Canada organization is curtailed in his or her ability to talk about the importance of voting, to encourage the public to get out and vote, to ensure that the laws and rules are being followed, and there is no cheating happening, that also undermines confidence in our democracy and the very processes by which our government and Parliament are made up.

What is needed is action. We can talk all we want about transparency and openness, and that is a good start, but we need to see action. I am proud to say that the Liberal Party has taken a number of concrete actions to restore trust in the institution of Parliament and in our democracy.

• (1705)

In fact, not long ago, the leader of the Liberal Party of Canada announced Senate reform. Some people have called this the biggest reform of the Senate that has happened since the Senate was first created. What the leader of the Liberal Party committed to is a change in how senators are appointed. Under a Liberal government, no longer would senators be appointed because they are the best-possible fundraisers for their partisan team and would be doing that on the public's dime. Under the Liberal leader's commitment, there would be an independent, non-partisan, and non-patronage process for appointing senators.

In order to walk that talk today, the Liberal leader released the Liberal senators from needing to be part of the national caucus, thinking through partisan matters as elected members of Parliament, of course, have to do. He released them from taking direction from the Liberal Party leader, released them from the time that had been devoted to those joint discussions, and certainly released them from the kind of following of instructions that we have seen the Conservative senators do, to the detriment of their own party and their own government when it came to the senators allegedly taking instructions from the Prime Minister's Office, allegedly white-washing Senate reports, and influencing a supposedly neutral audit of senators' expenses. Those kinds of activities are completely unacceptable and undermine the faith and confidence of Canadians in our Parliament and in our government.

Under the Liberal Party leader's Senate reform, Liberal senators are constructively working together. They are focused on public policy, on the well-being of Canadians, on their regions, and on the issues they are advancing and the expertise they are applying to the review of bills and policies. That is as they should be doing and as they would be doing in the future under a potential Liberal government. That is just one key initiative to walk the talk on openness, transparency, and democracy and to begin to restore the public's trust, the trust that has been so badly damaged, as the quotes with which I began my remarks attest.

*Business of Supply*

Co-operation is what we are looking for with this motion, and operation is what we are looking for from the parties in this initiative to make more transparent the spending of members of Parliament. The Liberal Party leader led the way with that last summer, by committing to transparent posting every three months of the travel and entertainment expenses, following a very effective proactive disclosure mechanism that was put in place by a previous Liberal prime minister in 2003 to cover the expenses of ministers. That has been in place ever since, and it made a lot of sense to adopt that mechanism for members of Parliament as part of that restoration of trust in our institutions. It was disappointing that, when the Liberal Party put forward a motion that all parties would post their expenses in this proactive disclosure framework used by ministers today, there was one party that blocked that motion, and that was the New Democratic Party.

Who knows what the New Democrats' idea is? I heard some of the comments of the previous speaker, the member for Burnaby—New Westminster, but I certainly did not clearly get why the New Democrats felt their party should not co-operate with a common framework of proactive and transparent disclosure such as the Liberals are doing; followed by the Conservative Party, whose members are also disclosing their information in a way that is transparent and restoring trust.

● (1710)

We are inviting the official opposition to join us in doing this in order to have a framework that is, as I said, managed by the non-partisan officials who are already skilled in ensuring that rules are complied with in terms of how budgets are spent.

It is important that we restore the trust, the confidence, and the spirit of co-operation, which is how we need to move forward to address the big public policy challenges that Canadians care about.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** It being 5:15 p.m., it is my duty to interrupt the proceedings and put forthwith every question necessary to dispose of the business of supply.

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

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

(Amendment agreed to)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Now the question is on the main motion, as amended. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion, as amended?

**Some hon. members:** Agreed.

**Some hon. members:** No.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** All those in favour of the motion will please say yea.

**Some hon. members:** Yea.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** All those opposed will please say nay.

**Some hon. members:** Nay.

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** In my opinion the yeas have it.

*And five or more members having risen:*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin):** Call in the members.

● (1800)

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

(Division No. 76)

## YEAS

## Members

Ablonczy	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Welland)	Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Allison	Ambler
Ambrose	Anders
Anderson	Andrews
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Atamanenko
Aubin	Ayala
Baird	Bateman
Bélanger	Bellavance
Benoit	Benskin
Bernier	Bevington
Bezan	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Blaney
Block	Borg
Boughen	Boulerice
Boutin-Sweet	Brahmi
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brosseau	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Butt	Byrne
Calandra	Calkins
Cannan	Carmichael
Caron	Carrie
Casey	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Chisu
Chong	Choquette
Christopherson	Clarke
Cleary	Clement
Comartin	Côté
Cotler	Crockatt
Crowder	Cullen
Cuzner	Daniel
Davidson	Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Davies (Vancouver East)	Day
Dechert	Del Mastro
Devolin	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dreeshen	Dubé
Dubourg	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseault
Easter	Eyking
Falk	Fantino
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fletcher
Fortin	Freeman
Galipeau	Gallant
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Gill	Glover
Godin	Goguen
Goldring	Goodale
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Grogulé	Harper
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Holder
Hsu	Hughes
Hyer	Jacob



*(Routine Proceedings)*

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	Lebel
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Leef	Leitch
Lemieux	Leslie
Leung	Liu
Lizon	Lobb
Lukiwski	Lunney
MacAulay	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Maguire
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	Mayes
McCallum	McColeman
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
McLeod	Menegakis
Merrifield	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	Nicholson
Norlock	Nunez-Melo
Obhrai	O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Pacetti
Papillon	Paradis
Patry	Payne
Péclet	Perreault
Pilon	Plamondon
Poilievre	Preston
Rafferty	Raït
Rankin	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Saxton	Scarpaleggia
Schellenberger	Scott
Sellah	Shea
Shipley	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Sitsabaiesan	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	St-Denis
Stewart	Stoffer
Storseth	Strahl
Sullivan	Sweet
Thibeault	Tilson
Toet	Toone
Tremblay	Trost
Trottier	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)	Young (Vancouver South)
Zimmer — 271	

[English]

## ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

### COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

#### PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

The House resumed from February 27 consideration of the motion.

**The Speaker:** The House will now proceed to the taking of the deferred recorded division on the third report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs.

● (1805)

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

*(Division No. 77)*

### YEAS

#### Members

Ablonczy	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anders	Anderson
Armstrong	Ashfield
Aspin	Baird
Bateman	Benoit
Bernier	Bezan
Blaney	Block
Boughen	Braid
Breitkreuz	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Falk	Fantino
Fast	Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)	Fletcher
Galipeau	Gallant
Gill	Glover
Goguen	Goldring
Goodyear	Gosal
Gourde	Grewal
Harper	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer
Hoback	Holder
James	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kent	Kerr
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lake	Lauzon
Lebel	Leef
Leitch	Lemieux
Leung	Lizon
Lobb	Lukiwski
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Maguire
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis
Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Port Moody—Westwood—Port Coquitlam)	
Moore (Fundy Royal)	

### NAYS

Nil

### PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.

*Private Members' Business*

Nicholson	Norlock
Obhrai	O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Paradis
Payne	Poilievre
Preston	Raiitt
Reid	Rempel
Richards	Rickford
Ritz	Saxton
Schellenberger	Shea
Shiple	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)	Wilks
Weston (Saint John)	Wong
Williamson	Young (Oakville)
Woodworth	Zimmer— 148
Young (Vancouver South)	

## NAYS

## Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Atamanenko	Aubin
Ayala	Bélangier
Bellavance	Benskin
Bevington	Blanchette
Blanchette-Lamothe	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brosseau
Byrne	Caron
Casey	Cash
Charlton	Chicoine
Chisholm	Choquette
Christopherson	Cleary
Comartin	Côté
Cotler	Crowder
Cullen	Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)	Davies (Vancouver East)
Day	Dewar
Dion	Dionne Labelle
Donnelly	Doré Lefebvre
Dubé	Dubourg
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseau
Easter	Eyking
Fortin	Freeman
Garrison	Genest
Genest-Jourdain	Giguère
Godin	Goodale
Groguhé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hsu	Hughes
Hyer	Jacob
Jones	Julian
Karygiannis	Kellway
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Martin	Masse
Mathysen	McCallum
McGuinty	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
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	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Patry	Péclet
Perreault	Pilon
Plamondon	Rafferty
Rankin	Ravignat
Raynault	Regan

Rousseau	Saganash
Sandhu	Scarpaleggia
Scott	Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)	
Sitsabaiesan	
St-Denis	Stewart
Stoffer	Sullivan
Thibeault	Toone
Tremblay	Turmel
Valeriote— 123	

## PAIRED

Nil

**The Speaker:** I declare the motion carried.[*Translation*]

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

**PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS**

● (1810)

[*English*]**AN ACT TO AMEND THE ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT (TRANSPARENCY AND DUTY TO DOCUMENT)**

**Mr. Pat Martin (Winnipeg Centre, NDP)** moved that Bill C-567, An Act to amend the Access to Information Act (transparency and duty to document), be read the second time and referred to a committee.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to stand today to introduce Bill C-567.

Sunlight is a powerful disinfectant, and freedom of information is the oxygen democracy breathes. The public has a right to know what their government is doing, and secrecy is the natural enemy of good public administration. These simple principles are the foundation of our access to information laws and the principles that this private member's bill seeks to strengthen and uphold.

I am honoured to have today as the seconder of Bill C-567 one of the country's leading authorities on the subject of access to information and the performance of the federal legislation from its inception to date, the member for Victoria. Parliament is fortunate to have such a learned and experienced fellow to contribute to our efforts to improve and strengthen the access to information regime.

It is the culture of secrecy that allows corruption to flourish and for maladministration and abuse of power to occur in government. Indeed, the seeds of corruption are planted in the dark. While I agree with the great American jurist Oliver Wendell Holmes when he said that one cannot legislate morality or enforce ethical conduct, there is no doubt in my mind that observation and scrutiny have the natural effect of elevating the standards of ethical behaviour and of curbing maladministration and abuse of power.

Again, sunlight is a powerful disinfectant. Being forced to operate in the light of day lifts the performance and raises the bar of good public administration.

Mr. Speaker, if there was less heckling and rattling over there, I could deliver my speech a lot more effectively.

*Private Members' Business*

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Order. I ask all hon. members who wish to carry on meetings and such to perhaps use their own lobbies.

Order. The hon. member for Winnipeg Centre.

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Mr. Speaker, being forced to operate in the light of day lifts the performance and raises the bar of good public administration. Openness and transparency lead to greater care, frugality, integrity, and honesty. Secrecy diminishes performance in all of those categories.

As former information commissioner John Reid put it, "...all the checks and balances designed to limit abuses of government power are dependent upon there being [free] access by outsiders to government's insider information". That notion of government's insider information speaks to the very root of the problem. The information does not belong to the government or the bureaucracies or the public servants who created it. It belongs to the people. Government information belongs to the citizens whose tax dollars paid for it and whose votes gave the government permission to create it. It should not be like pulling teeth to get hold of it.

Surely parliamentarians who are trying to get information from the government so they can effectively do their jobs on behalf of the people who elected them should not be treated as outsiders trying to get our hands on insider information. Yet increasingly, that is the situation we find ourselves in.

Mr. Reid went on to say that a government and "[a] public service which holds tight to a culture of secrecy is a [government and] a public service ripe for abuse". Yet too many of our senior public servants still subscribe to the views of Sir Humphrey, in the British TV series *Yes, Minister*, when he advised, "You can have good government, or you can have open government. But, prime minister, you can't have both".

While successive Canadian governments have paid lip service to the notions of transparency and accountability to the point where they have become almost meaningless buzzwords in this country, very few have shown any real commitment to open government beyond the bare minimum required to maintain the illusion.

In the words of former auditor general Denis Desautels,

There is a reluctance to let Parliament and the public know how [public] programs are working, because...you may be giving your opponents the stick to beat you with. And even when a minister is not personally concerned with this, senior public servants assume this fear on the minister's behalf. [They]...try to [give out] as little as possible that would ever expose their department to [any] criticism".

In spite of Prime Minister Trudeau's lofty language that the new law would promote effective participation of citizens and organizations in the taking of public decisions, successive governments have failed to live up to those noble principles. In fact, the ink was hardly dry on the legislation on July 1, 1983 before senior officials began routinely hiding information that the drafters of the ATIA intended to remain public.

I think the hon. John Crosbie, the first justice minister to be responsible for the new access act, set the tone for all future administrations when he dismissed the new law as a tool for "mischief-makers" whose objective "[i]n the vast majority of

instances" is simply to "embarrass political leaders and to titillate the public".

That attitude certainly created the atmosphere we recognize today. Whether it was the tainted blood scandal, the polling on constitutional reform, the Somalia inquiry, or more recently, the conditions of Afghan detainees, successive governments have shown their unwillingness to live up to the letter or the spirit of the act. In fact, there has developed an increasingly elaborate and almost paranoid game of cat and mouse to keep important information from the prying eyes of the public.

It has been my experience that the amount of crowing about transparency and accountability is directly proportional to the increased devotion to secrecy, deliberate obfuscation, and hoarding of information for no defensible reason.

If inquiries and requests for information are viewed as a pesky nuisance, or worse yet, as a threat, there will continue to be a lack of co-operation, unreasonable delays, poor compliance, and hostility and antagonism toward requesters. A grudging, resentful adherence to the letter of the law will never be enough to meet the spirit of openness.

This private member's bill does not pretend to be a comprehensive rewrite of the access to information legislation, nor does it pretend to fix or correct all of its shortcomings. A comprehensive review of the act is long overdue, and successive information commissioners have called for such a review for almost 30 years.

Commissioner John Reid went as far as to table a whole package of legislative reform called the open government act, which I was proud to table as a private member's bill in 2006, 2008, and 2011. Instead, Bill C-567 is a modest effort and seeks to address only those aspects of reform on which there is a stated and documented consensus.

• (1815)

Colleagues on the government benches will recognize all six elements of Bill C-567, as they are taken chapter and verse directly out of the Conservative Party election platform. In fact, there is nothing in my bill that is not taken word for word from the election promises that the present Conservative government made to Canadians.

There are six simple points. The first would give the Information Commissioner of Canada order-making powers to compel the release of information that he or she determines should be released. Members will find this in clause 5 of my bill.

The second point would be to expand the coverage of the act to all crown corporations, officers of Parliament, and foundations and organizations that spend taxpayers' money or perform public functions. Members will find that in clause 9 of the bill.

The third point would subject the exclusions of cabinet confidences to the review of the Information Commissioner of Canada. That is in clause 4 of my bill.

The fourth point would oblige public officials to create documents and retain the records necessary to document their actions or decisions. That is in subclause 2(1).

*Private Members' Business*

The fifth point would provide a general public interest override for all exemptions so that the public interest is put before the secrecy of the government.

The final point, number six, would ensure that all exemptions from the disclosure of government information are justified only on the basis of harm or injury that would result from the disclosure, not blanket exemption rules.

As I said, all six of these points are directly from the Conservative Party's own election campaign platform.

In my final few minutes, I would like to recognize and pay tribute to some of those who have been champions over the years of the public's right to know, and who are therefore champions of democracy, in my view. First of all, I would like to pay tribute to the hon. Gerald Baldwin, a nine-term Progressive Conservative MP, from Peace River, whose groundbreaking private member's bill from 1969 languished under the scrutiny of the regulations committee until 1978. That bill would serve as the foundation of the act that came about a few years later.

Next is Svend Robinson, a nine-term NDP MP, from Burnaby—Douglas, who was an early champion of access reform. He helped to develop the current legislation in 1982.

John Bryden, former Liberal MP and former editor of the *Toronto Star*, dedicated his entire career as a member of Parliament to freedom of information reform. John founded and chaired the ad hoc parliamentary committee on access to information, when his own government of the day would not put forward the amendments that he sought. I was proud to take over as sponsor of John Bryden's private member's bill on ATI reform in 2004, when he lost his seat.

The hon. Bill Blaikie, a 30-year veteran NDP MP, and former Dean of the House of Commons, was a tireless advocate of the people's right to know and better access reform.

Former information commissioner John Reid went as far as to table a total rewrite of the legislation as a result of his profound frustration in trying to administer a dysfunctional act. It was his open government act that formed the foundation of the Conservative Party campaign promises that created this bill.

Finally, I would like to recognize the sitting member for Mount Royal, who as the former Liberal minister of justice worked closely with me to try to introduce access to information reform measures. When he was unable to do so, he was honest enough to admit that the forces against such reform were legion, and they proved to be insurmountable. I respect him for trying, and I respect his honesty after failing.

Today's Access to Information Act is terribly outdated and dysfunctional. It is broken and in desperate need of repair. The current Information Commissioner of Canada, in her October 2013, report said, "there are unmistakable signs of significant deterioration in the federal Access to Information system".

The Conservatives agreed, when they were running for office, that all of the changes suggested in Bill C-567 are desirable and necessary if we are to make manifest the lofty principles of freedom to information and the people's right to know. They promised the Canadian people that, if elected, they would implement the six

specific changes to the Access to Information Act found in Bill C-567, and today I hold them at their word.

• (1820)

**Mr. Erin O'Toole (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I have to admit to the House that I listened with great interest, but a bit of shock at the irony of the hon. member's speech. He mentioned the importance of bright lights and transparency; he mentioned noble principles; he even quoted famous jurist Oliver Wendell Holmes. However, the member had the opportunity, with respect to a defence fund that he was involved with, to provide that same level of transparency and disclosure in terms of the structure and governance of the fund and the compliance sought for the fund with Elections Canada and the Ethics Commissioner, including donations to that fund to become public for transparency.

I would ask the hon. member whether the spirit of his bill might lead to the transparency efforts on the hon. member's behalf now on that fund, to allow those same bright lights and that spirit of transparency to shine down on that member's defence fund.

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Mr. Speaker, I am glad to have the opportunity to remind my colleague of the Conservative Party platform, "Stand up for Canada". A lot of members will recognize it and remember it well. My colleague even says he sleeps with a copy of it under his pillow. That is how committed he is to these promises.

I could direct my colleague, as he is relatively new to the House, having been elected in a byelection, I believe, after the Conservative member of Parliament in his area had to resign in disgrace. He should be aware of page 12 of the very Conservative campaign platform that I am referring to, which has the six points that comprise the six points in my bill. It says the Conservative government would "give the Information Commissioner the power to order the release of information".

This is a common theme throughout the access to information community. Instead of the Information Commissioner having to seek satisfaction in the courts when government departments refuse to disclose information that she, after investigation, has deemed should be released, she can order and direct the release of those documents.

The other five points I will leave to my colleague to read. Perhaps he could ask his colleague, the Minister of Industry, for his copy that he keeps under his pillow and they could study it together.

• (1825)

[Translation]

**Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my colleague on this wonderful bill, which comes at a critical time, since this Conservative government is showing an increasing lack of transparency.

A *Montreal Gazette* editorial quotes the Prime Minister. I would like to read what he had to say.

[English]

Before the Prime Minister came to power, he said:

Information is the lifeblood of a democracy. Without adequate access to key information about government policies and programs, citizens and parliamentarians cannot make informed decisions and incompetent or corrupt governments can be hidden under a cloak of secrecy.

*Private Members' Business*

[Translation]

He said those words when he was the opposition leader, but his government has done exactly the opposite.

Why does the member think the government has taken so long to fulfill its promises? Can he also comment on whether government members are disappointed when they look at the promises that were made and the plan for 2014?

[English]

**Mr. Pat Martin:** Mr. Speaker, there was great hope and optimism that the Conservatives were going to be different. In fact, John Bryden, the Liberal MP I made reference to, crossed the floor. He was so frustrated with his own party for failing to introduce the measures he thought were the single most important thing one could do, that he crossed the floor to the Conservatives and ran as a Conservative when he lost his election.

The campaign promise was that the Conservatives would introduce all of the Information Commissioner's recommendations in his open government act and, in fact, it was part of the Federal Accountability Act until it was pulled out. I was instrumental in passing the Conservatives' Federal Accountability Act as the swing vote on the parliamentary committee that passed it. Every motion needed my support. We were shocked when the freedom of information chapter was lifted out of the Federal Accountability Act.

I think I can only quote the former minister of justice, the member for Mount Royal. He underestimated that the opposition to freedom of information is legion and, when the powers that be got to the Conservatives and asked what they could possibly be thinking and why they would stipulate themselves to that level of scrutiny voluntarily, they chickened out, backed out, and broke their promises. We are asking them to fulfill their commitment to Canadians today with these six simple measures.

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## GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BILL C-20—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise that agreements could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Orders 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the second reading stage of Bill C-20, an act to implement the free trade agreement between Canada and the Republic of Honduras, the agreement on environmental cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Honduras and the agreement on labour cooperation between Canada and the Republic of Honduras

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stage.

BILL C-25—NOTICE OF TIME ALLOCATION MOTION

**Hon. Peter Van Loan (Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to advise that

agreements could not be reached under the provisions of Standing Orders 78(1) or 78(2) with respect to the second reading stage of Bill C-25, an act respecting the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation Band order.

Under the provisions of Standing Order 78(3), I give notice that a minister of the Crown will propose at the next sitting a motion to allot a specific number of days or hours for the consideration and disposal of proceedings at the said stage.

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## PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[English]

### AN ACT TO AMEND THE ACCESS TO INFORMATION ACT (TRANSPARENCY AND DUTY TO DOCUMENT)

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

**Mr. Robert Goguen (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise to speak to Bill C-567, introduced on January 28 by the hon. member of the NDP for Winnipeg Centre, entitled, An Act to amend the Access to Information Act (transparency and duty to document).

My colleague spoke about the requirement to document decisions and actions. I agree that this can be problematic and requires careful consideration.

Let me turn the attention of the House to another important and problematic feature of Bill C-567. It appears in clause 3, which would modify the current exemption that government institutions can use to protect records relating to the operations of government. I believe it is important to draw the attention of the House to the fact that the current exemption in the Access to Information Act that can be used to protect advice prepared for government is referred to as a "discretionary exemption". This means that the head of a government institution must first decide whether a particular record contains advice prepared for government. Next, the head must decide whether to exercise that discretion by way of protecting the record or by way of releasing it. To me this seems to be a fair approach.

This exemption is an important one. It is used to protect the advice and recommendations that public servants give to a minister or advice or recommendations that may be coming from a minister. The exemption is also used to protect the confidential deliberations taking place within the public service on policy options.

The rationale behind this exemption is that disclosure can, at times, have a chilling effect on the candidness of advice, recommendations, consultations, and deliberations given or received by the federal public service and can lead to a reluctance to deal frankly with a difficult situation.

The modification proposed by Bill C-567 would require that government institutions conclude that the disclosure of a record is harmful to their operations and their processes before they decide to refuse to disclose the record. I wonder how workable it would be for government institutions that have a genuine reason to protect, at least temporarily, advice prepared for government to be able to demonstrate that the release of the advice would be harmful to their operations.

*Private Members' Business*

I will also add that the bill would not only add this prejudice test, but it would also shorten the time period of application of this exemption to five years instead of twenty years. If I understand correctly, this exemption would, after five years, no longer be applicable by a government institution to protect the policy advice it gave to a minister.

Let me turn to another provision of Bill C-567. Clause 4 constitutes a crucial aspect of this bill. As a result of clause 4, the bill would considerably modify the way that confidences of the Queen's Privy Council for Canada have been treated under the Access to Information Act for the past 30 years. We can all agree with the Supreme Court of Canada when it said that cabinet confidentiality was essential to good government in *Babcock v. Canada*, 2002, SCC 57, at paragraph 15.

There exists in Canada a constitutional convention wherein private deliberations between ministers of the crown for the purpose of rendering advice to Her Majesty should remain confidential. This constitutional convention has been recognized in three statutes, the Access to Information Act, the Privacy Act, and the Canada Evidence Act. It is in recognition of this convention that cabinet confidences have been excluded from the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act. It is in recognition of this convention that in the context of litigation, under the Canada Evidence Act, cabinet confidences cannot be reviewed by a court. Because of this exclusion in the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act, the information and privacy commissioners do not have access to cabinet confidences to review them or make findings on them. The courts, reviewing a decision from a government institution, cannot see cabinet confidences either. That is the current state of the law.

What Bill C-567 proposes to do is to replace the exclusion for cabinet confidences that has been in existence for less than 20 years by an exemption that would apply to cabinet confidences in existence for less than 15 years. Because records subject to an exemption, as opposed to an exclusion, are subject to the act, this amendment would give the Information Commissioner the power to review cabinet confidence documents during his or her investigations and would give the Federal Court a right to review these documents. With this bill, the non-exhaustive list of records that could be included as cabinet confidences would be replaced by a more narrow definition of the concept. It is unclear whether the definition would capture all of the types of documents currently included in the list of examples of cabinet confidences.

• (1830)

I would also remind the House that as the bill touches only on the Access to Information Act, there would be inconsistencies with respect to other legislation that also govern the treatment of cabinet confidences, such as the Privacy Act and the Canada Evidence Act.

Another important feature of Bill C-567 is that it would give the Information Commissioner of Canada the power to order government institutions to disclose documents, including cabinet confidences. This is a fundamental change in the role of the information commissioner. It constitutes a shift from her role as an ombudsman to one of a quasi-judicial order-making body. This is a substantial amendment that is not at all likely to improve our access to information regime.

In his proposed reforms to the Access to Information Act, former information commissioner Reid did not recommend that the role of the information commissioner be changed in any such way. Mr. Reid's view was that the ombudsman model works effectively; that fewer than 1% of complaints end up in courts; and that based on experience in other jurisdictions, the order-making model would not reduce litigation or improve outcomes. His predecessor, the late John Grace, also voiced similar views during his mandate.

The bill also contains a requirement that the head of a government institution disclose a record if the public interest in disclosure clearly outweighs the need to maintain the secrecy of the information, even if an exemption would otherwise apply. What this means exactly is not clear to me, and what guidance could be given to government institutions on this matter is also equally unclear.

What members of the House would need to think very carefully about is the impact that such a public interest override test would have on the application of certain very important exemptions in the Access to Information Act. Most notable is the one that relates to information obtained in confidence from our international allies or provincial counterparts. This exemption, which is mandatory for very good reasons, under Bill C-567, would be subject to a public interest override test.

What would this mean? What greater public interest could justify the disclosure of records provided to us in confidence by another government? How would we explain that the documents that we received in confidence from our international or provincial counterparts may not necessarily remain protected? These are serious concerns.

The same public interest test would apply to the exemption protecting personal information. We all know that personal information about an individual is protected under the Privacy Act. The Courts have recognized that the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act are two-sided coins. Together, they set out the rules governing disclosure and protection of information held by the federal government. They are equally important statutes, and when applying them, judges must read them together. The Supreme Court of Canada said that the Access to information Act and the Privacy Act are a seamless code, with complementary provisions that can and should be interpreted harmoniously.

There are provisions in the Access to Information Act that allow for personal information to be disclosed in very specific circumstances and as instructed by the court. These provisions are carefully drafted to work harmoniously with the Privacy Act. This means that more personal information cannot be disclosed under the Access to Information Act than would be authorized under the Privacy Act. Both statutes regulate the disclosure of personal information to third parties in the same way.

It is important to note that what is being proposed could be very damaging to privacy interests. As most of us no doubt realize, the federal government relies on Canadians' willingness to provide the government with their sensitive personal information so that the government, in turn, can run a myriad of important programs and activities. I would emphasize that in many situations, individuals are actually obliged to provide the government with their personal information.

There is a fundamental bargain involved here, which is that because the government requires so much personal information in order to do its business, it bears a heavy burden to take great care with the personal information with which Canadians entrust their government. I believe that the introduction of a public interest override in the Access to Information Act requires great consideration.

To conclude, I would reiterate the message that the former minister of justice, the member for Niagara Falls, gave, in 2009, in the government's response to the report of the House Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics, which studied the 12 recommendations for reform by Commissioner Marleau. He indicated the following:

The Access to Information Act is a strong piece of legislation. It is crucial that careful consideration be given to the impact changes to the legislation may have on the operations of the [access to information] program. Legislative amendments must be examined in the context of administrative alternatives, such as enhanced guidance and training that can be equally effective to realize continued improvements.

I believe that this message is still sound today.

● (1835)

**Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, it is with pleasure that I rise today to speak to Bill C-567, introduced by the member for Winnipeg Centre.

I can safely say that over the years I have witnessed first-hand what has been a relatively slow but important evolution, if I can put it that way, of governments at different levels, both in Ottawa and at the provincial level, where we have seen the benefits of trying to ensure that the citizenry and other stakeholders have better and more access to government documents. It was interesting that the member for Winnipeg Centre, in his opening remarks, talked about transparency and the shedding of light and how we as a community and a society can benefit if we are able to make greater strides toward getting just that: greater access to information.

Quite often over the years I have found there is a great willingness from opposition benches and from a few others who want to see, in a more public way, more transparency on the whole issue of access to information. We find that opposition members are constantly raising the issue in different forms, whether through letters to different departments or by requesting information through the House, trying to draw out details on different types of programs and services that are provided by the government.

It is important that we recognize that in this case the Information Commissioner plays a very strong role in ensuring the integrity of our system. Most Canadians would be somewhat surprised at the degree the Information Commissioner and the roles and responsibilities of the office have in ensuring we see more transparency within the government. This is something I believe is absolutely

### *Private Members' Business*

critical for us to continue to move forward. On that particular note, that is the reason it is important that we recognize this bill for what it is and, at the very least, allow it to go to committee. I listened to the previous speaker, and there is no doubt that the government does have some concerns related to the bill, and I suspect there might be opportunities to, at the very least, make some amendments that might improve upon it.

However, I would suggest that there is a potential for a consensus that we can do more in terms of being more progressive at improving what we currently have. The member for Winnipeg Centre made reference to a platform, and it is important to recognize that Bill C-567 has been drafted to include commitments that actually were made by the Conservative Party and the Prime Minister in 2006 as a campaign platform. Back in 2006, the current government had recognized deficiencies and the way in which we could actually improve upon those deficiencies. That is why I say that through time I believe what we are seeing is a stronger drive toward that higher sense of accountability and transparency. I would suggest it is only natural that we would want to have further debate and changes to legislation that would ultimately ensure more transparency and more accountability on what issues are important to Canadians.

Less than an hour ago, we had an important vote on the Liberal Party's opposition motion that dealt with the whole issue of proactive disclosure and how much we were able to accomplish in nine months.

● (1840)

The leader of the Liberal Party stood in his place, at the seat right in front of me, and proclaimed that we need to have proactive disclosure. Canadians are demanding more transparency and more accountability. He then took it to the next step and said that his expectation was that all Liberal members of Parliament would comply with that, and participate in proactive disclosure.

Not much longer after that, the Conservative Party recognized the merits of what the leader of the Liberal Party was talking about. Today, we ultimately passed an opposition motion that is in essence going to enact exactly what the leader of the Liberal Party talked about last June.

I would suggest that this is something we should reflect on when we look at this particular piece of legislation. Why not recognize the very tangible public policy that Canadians will get behind and support? I believe this is one piece of legislation that does have merit.

We have all sorts of annual conferences taking place with different stakeholders. The commissioner is no different. We have different agencies across the country, ombudsmen and access to information officers, that deal with the delicate issues of privacy and access to information.

They had a conference back in October 2013 where ombudspersons and information and privacy commissioners from across the country passed a resolution urging the federal, provincial, and territorial governments to update their respective laws.

*Private Members' Business*

These independent agencies recognized the deficiencies there, and are challenging legislators, whether at the provincial or national level. Here we are talking about a proposed national bill that has a great deal of merit.

Some, including myself, would ultimately argue that this legislation, if allowed to go to the committee stage, might be able to address some of the issues raised at the conference of independent, non-partisan, apolitical organizations established by different governments of different political stripes.

Their recommendations are, and maybe I will cite some: creating a legislative duty to document deliberations, actions, and decisions of public entities to promote transparency and accountability; strong monitoring and enforcement powers for regulators, such as binding orders and penalties for non-compliance; and establishing when and how individuals should be notified when their personal information has been lost, stolen, or improperly accessed.

As the member for Winnipeg Centre pointed out, the changes being proposed here are part of a platform. The Liberal Party has seen the merit in accepting many of the ideas and suggestions being brought forward.

As we saw with the leader of the Liberal Party on the proactive disclosure issue, we have an issue that if the debate is allowed to continue here, hopefully members, in particular the Conservative members, will see the merit in allowing the bill to go to committee, where we could have a more wholesome, full discussion on what is an important issue for all of us.

We need to feel comfortable in knowing that having access to information is of critical importance, and that there is a way we can appeal to someone, such as the Information Commissioner, when we feel there needs to be more or that we are missing out on something.

• (1845)

For Canadians and others who want to get a better idea there are resources that they can tap into. The commissioner has a well-developed website. There is all sorts of information even at the different levels that we need to have access to. There are agencies to protect that access and to ensure that we continue to move forward.

By allowing this bill to pass and go to committee, we would be taking a step forward on the important issue of access to information, which would ensure more accountability and more transparency.

• (1850)

**Mr. Murray Rankin (Victoria, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I am delighted to rise today to speak in strong and enthusiastic support for the private member's bill introduced by my friend from Winnipeg Centre.

I am a little concerned. I thought this bill would have found unanimous support in the House. I say that because I know that my friend utilized the 2006 campaign promises in the Accountability Act by the Conservative Party. These were principles, every single one of the six that are before us tonight, that found their way into that document. I assumed that we were here to give support to those principles.

I want to thank my friend from Winnipeg North who just spoke and who made a very constructive suggestion in urging the House to

pass the bill and allow it to be sent to committee where we can look at it in greater detail.

I have a great interest in this topic. I studied freedom of information in the United States in graduate school. I was invited by the former Government of British Columbia to draft its freedom of information and protection of privacy act, the first bill of its kind in that province, which received unanimous support in the legislative assembly.

This is a topic I care a great deal about. I worked as a lobbyist for the Canadian Bar Association some 30 years or more ago when the Conservatives had to grapple with the new Access to Information Act. That was a bill under the Joe Clark administration, which was visited upon Mr. Trudeau's regime subsequently, and it was finally Mr. Mulroney who had to live with the consequences of Canada's first Access to Information Act.

Concern has motivated this reform initiative, concern that it has been over 30 years that we have had the act. Imagine what has changed in that period. The advent of computers is something that needs to be considered. Emails, correspondence, that sort of thing, were not even part of the scene back in 1982 when our Access to Information Act was first brought in.

The act attempted to change a culture of secrecy that is part of our Westminster parliamentary system, alas, and there was great optimism that it would do so.

Since that time, the courts have said that access to information is what they term a "quasi-constitutional" right; not quite a charter right, but something approaching that in its importance.

I had the great honour to work with the Conservative member of Parliament for Peace River, the late Jed Baldwin, who has been called the father of freedom of information in this country, and who worked tirelessly to promote the first such bill.

I worked on a committee of the House of Commons with my friend and constituent David Flaherty, one of Canada's leading experts on data protection. That committee came up with 102 recommendations for reform of the legislation before us, the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act. I am pleased that there was unanimous support for that bill, including a backbencher at the time, the member of Parliament for Niagara Falls, who subsequently has become the Minister of National Defence in the current government, joining in a unanimous report to promote change in this legislation.

I thought that there would be no difficulty in having the six principles that were in the 2006 accountability platform of the Conservative Party of Canada brought forward and implemented. I heard the parliamentary secretary speak to those six elements and I think they deserve greater attention.



*Private Members' Business*

The first element is the order-making power, not to simply have an ombudsperson who recommends to government what it should do, but an order-making power. That was the centrepiece of the legislative change in Ontario, Quebec, British Columbia, Newfoundland, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and on it goes. Every province has that power; the federal government chooses not to. I concede that the parliamentary secretary is right in referring to John Reid and Mr. Grace in saying they did not think that was necessary, but subsequently that has been what most critics have said is required.

The second thing in the bill is the expansion to crown corporations, officers of Parliament, and the like. I cannot see why that is particularly controversial.

• (1855)

Third, there is controversy about the nature of cabinet confidences. The parliamentary secretary spoke to that. I would be the first to agree that it is central in our system of government that there be cabinet confidences.

The issue is whether we need the only exclusion in the Commonwealth, the only exclusion of which I am aware anywhere, that is protecting cabinet confidences. That came from a time when the clerk of the Privy Council, Mr. Pitfield, argued that the only way we would get the law in Canada would be if we had it.

It has been 30 years. None of the provinces have it. We have not seen the world come to an end. Cabinet confidences are still an exemption, not an exclusion. That is, there is a box around cabinet confidences that would remain. There is no problem with this that the other provinces have encountered. It has not been a problem.

The exclusion that was in here was a cost of getting this bill through the then Liberal government. It is no longer necessary. I believe that would bring us in harmony with what other provinces uniformly have.

My friend from Winnipeg Centre stressed the importance of the fourth element, which was the requirement to create records, to document government, to not have an oral culture. If we talk to archivists and people who work in the public service, they will acknowledge that there needs to be such a section. There needs to be a place we can go to find out what the government is doing with our money to create records that are the public's.

The next thing that was talked about, which was the public interest override, is something that is likewise found certainly in the British Columbia and Ontario statutes and I believe in others as well. It is not something that has proven to be a great obstacle. I concede that the drafting of that, vis-à-vis the other exemptions, does need attention, and that could be done at committee and given some attention.

The last issue that was problematic, and the one with which the parliamentary secretary began his remarks, is the policy advice exemption. Those in the freedom of information business call this the Mack truck clause. That is, everything can become advice to government and then not be able to be seen.

What is in place now is a class exemption. If it is called policy advice, that is the end of the story. The reform the Conservatives promoted back in 2006, and that we hope will be accepted now, is

that there be an injury test to determine whether the disclosure, although it would be policy advice, would reasonably be likely to harm some government interest.

In response to the parliamentary secretary, there are still lots of other exemptions if that one were no longer available. We would still be able to argue that it would be injurious to national security, to use an example the parliamentary secretary used, or it could be a cabinet confidence or one of the many other exemptions that are listed in this statute. The difference would be that the government could not just say that it is in that box, that exemption, that category. It would have to say, and prove, that it would cause harm.

That does not seem like a particularly radical notion. Indeed, it is one that is found in statutes across the land and across the world. When the Conservative governments of England brought in a freedom of information act, they had no trouble with the principles being proposed by my friend from Winnipeg Centre.

This is modern legislation that takes into account the computer era in which we live. I have tried to go through the six elements of the bill, all of them accepted and promoted by the Conservatives when they were seeking office. That is why I hope we can persuade the Conservatives to go back to where they came from, to their roots, and seek the kind of transparency, the kind of accountability, I think Canadians elected them to promote.

I do not think there is any need to be partisan about this. It is a quasi-constitutional right, the courts have said. Let us get it right. Let us make it as good as we can.

Again, I am indebted to my friend from Winnipeg North, who suggested that we send it to committee so that we can look at it, examine it, hear from experts, and see what the problems may or may not be.

It is not just my friend from Winnipeg Centre and I who are concerned about this. Our current Information Commissioner, Suzanne Legault, has said as follows:

Access is one of the tools that make citizen engagement in government and the public policy process possible. When institutions falter in their service to requesters, it is more than just an inconvenience to those individuals and organizations; ultimately, it is the health of Canadian democracy that is at stake.

• (1900)

Thirty years later, we stand before this House again to try to realize the dream that Canadians have of an accountable government, and access to information is the root of that. I say it is time to join together and create a transparent and accountable government through this legislation.

**Mr. Bob Dechert (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I rise at this time to comment on Bill C-567, an act to amend the Access to Information Act, transparency and duty to document. This private member's bill by the hon. member for Winnipeg Centre would make a number of amendments to the Access to Information Act.

*Private Members' Business*

I do not know if members of this House are aware that the NDP member for Winnipeg Centre introduced his first private member's bill to amend the Access to Information Act in May 2008. Bill C-554 was at the time entitled "An Act to amend the Access to Information Act (open government)".

I will say that the proposals contained in that bill were not new. The member of Parliament was essentially introducing proposals developed by Information Commissioner John Reid in 2005. Some of these proposals were even endorsed by Justice John Gomery in his 2006 report for the commission of inquiry into the sponsorship program. The proposals are overall the same: expanded coverage of the act, duty to create records, repealing the exclusion for cabinet confidences, et cetera. Bill C-554 died on the order paper with the dissolution of Parliament in 2008.

The member for Winnipeg Centre reintroduced his bill in the 40th Parliament in February 2009. It was then numbered Bill C-326, and it was also called "open government". The bill did not progress after first reading.

The same proposals were reintroduced by the member for Winnipeg Centre in September 2011 in Bill C-301 under the same title. The bill did not go further than the first reading.

Here we are today with Bill C-567, an act to amend the Access to Information Act. Bill C-567 is subtitled "transparency and duty to document" instead of "open government", but it is essentially the same as the previous bills.

We can all agree that strong access to information legislation is essential to a properly functioning democracy. It is true that an effective system of democracy requires the government to be accountable for its policies and their administration. We all recognize that access to information legislation acts as a check on government activity.

In one of its first judgments regarding the act, the Supreme Court of Canada clearly stated that for a country to have access to information legislation is an integral part of democracy. Our government wholeheartedly agreed with this view.

Let me turn now to all the steps our government has already taken to promote open government, transparency, and accountability.

In April 2006, our government introduced the Federal Accountability Act and action plan. Through the Federal Accountability Act and action plan, the Government of Canada brought forward specific measures to help strengthen accountability and increase transparency and oversight in government operations. The comprehensive action plan includes the Federal Accountability Act as well as supporting policy and other non-legislative measures.

The Federal Accountability Act amended the Access to Information Act in important areas. It focused on openness and accountability by expanding the coverage of the act to include a number of officers of Parliament and all Crown corporations, as well as various foundations created under federal statute. It also facilitated openness by creating a duty for government institutions to assist requesters without regard to their identity, and to make reasonable efforts to respond accurately and completely to their requests, in the format requested.

However, the federal accountability action plan did not just amend the Access to Information Act to improve transparency, openness, and accountability of government; it also amended other specific legislation and strengthened the policy framework to improve accountability.

I will give a short list of the main things that were achieved through the action plan, which all translate into more openness, transparency, and accountability of government.

We cleaned up the procurement process for government contracts by enshrining in a law a commitment to fairness, transparency, and openness in the process and by appointing an independent procurement auditor to provide additional oversight. That is a major achievement toward transparency.

We did more.

We strengthened the power of the Auditor General by expanding the reach and scope of the Auditor General's investigative powers to help Parliament hold the government to account.

We strengthened auditing and accountability requirements within departments by clarifying the managerial responsibilities of deputy heads within the framework of ministerial responsibility, and by bolstering the internal audit function within departments and Crown corporations. This translates into a requirement to document decisions and actions in a variety of areas.

I stress once more that our government has already done a lot in the area of transparency, openness, and accountability, and we continue to find ways to do more.

● (1905)

For example, my hon. colleague, the President of the Treasury Board, who shares with the Minister of Justice the responsibility for the Access to Information Act, is currently modernizing the policies regarding the act and examining ways to simplify the process for access requesters.

Last June, the President of the Treasury Board launched the Government of Canada's next generation open data portal, providing unprecedented access to government data and information, and demonstrating Canada's international commitment to transparency and open government. The open data portal contains datasets compiled by over 20 departments and agencies, covering a broad range of topics, from housing to health and environmental data. By accessing the portal, people have the opportunity to explore local census or crime statistics, immigration data, air quality data, coast-to-coast mapping data, and much more.

In January of this year, the President of the Treasury Board launched an initiative where access requesters can make their demands online via the access to information and privacy online request tool. More federal organizations are now a part of this initiative. In the first 10 months since the tool was launched, almost 21,000 requests have been submitted using this option.

*Adjournment Proceedings*

Let us not forget the open government initiative, which Canada is a part of. This international movement has translated into key achievements for Canadians, such as their capacity now to browse online through summaries of completed access to information requests from key federal institutions, their capacity to search the Government of Canada's expenditure database for detailed departmental spending information, and the proactive disclosure of financial and human resources related information of federal government departments.

What our government has realized is that there is no one single vehicle to improve transparency and accountability and to achieve openness of government. Transparency and accountability can and must be achieved through a variety of measures and instruments. The Access to Information Act is not the only vehicle by which to achieve transparency.

The purpose of the Access to Information Act is quite clear. It is to extend the present laws of Canada to provide a right of access to information in records under the control of a government institution, in accordance with the principles that government information should be made available to the public and that necessary exceptions to the right of access should be limited.

Thirty-one years ago, when it enacted the Access to Information Act after many studies, Parliament recognized that a balance was needed between transparency and secrecy, that not every government document should be made available to the public and that certain interests deserved to be protected.

The Access to Information Act is, by its nature, all about a complex balancing of openness, transparency, and accessibility to Canadians, and accountability. The Access to Information Act is a powerful piece of legislation that works. It works because it reveals what needs to be revealed, and equally importantly, through its exemptions, it protects information that must be protected for a properly functioning democracy.

Although we are prepared to examine the proposals in the bill, we also need to keep in mind everything that we have done to achieve transparency and accountability in this government.

[*Translation*]

**Ms. Charmaine Borg (Terrebonne—Blainville, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, I will be brief because I do not have much time.

I would like to congratulate my colleague on his initiative. The Access to Information Act is extremely outdated. We have been suggesting changes for a long time, but nobody has done anything. Today our colleague wants us to take action.

I was disgusted when I heard the parliamentary secretary say that the bill had quite a few problems. After all, it was copied right from the Conservative platform. He might as well have been commenting on the Conservatives' commitments and their promises to Canadians.

The Conservatives should keep the promises they made to Canadians in the hopes of getting elected. They should support my colleague's bill. Numerous experts, including the Information Commissioner, Suzanne Legault, who is doing an excellent job, have asked the government to update the law because it is outdated.

● (1910)

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** The hon. member for Terrebonne—Blainville will have nine minutes to speak when the House resumes debate on this motion.

The hour provided for the consideration of private members' business has now expired. The order is dropped to the bottom of the order of precedence on the order paper.

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## ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

[*English*]

### INTERNATIONAL TRADE

**Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP):** Mr. Speaker, New Democrats believe in open and progressive trade. We believe in negotiating new market access for our exporters to unlock good jobs here in Canada. We believe in promoting value-added industries to raise standards of living and create benefits for all Canadians and across all sectors.

Canada is a wealthy country and a trading nation. We have maintained strong trade balances for decades, yet this story has changed under the Conservative government.

On February 11, I asked the Minister of International Trade to explain to Canadians why his trade policies were failing to reverse Canada's troubling numbers on trade. I was referring to news that Canada's trade deficit had widened to \$1.7 billion in December 2013, worse than that forecasted by economic experts, and that Canada's monthly merchandise trade deficit was now more than two years old. That deficit was big enough in that fiscal quarter to knock a full percentage point off of Canada's GDP.

Since then, Statistics Canada has announced that Canada's current account deficit has increased to \$16 billion in the fourth quarter of 2013, and our current account deficit for 2013 now totals \$61 billion. Our current account has been in deficit now for five straight consecutive years.

When the Conservatives came to power in 2006, they inherited a current account surplus of some \$26 billion. Today we have a current account deficit of some \$61 billion. That is an \$85-billion swing in seven years. That is a \$12-billion loss in our current account performance for each and every year that the Conservatives have been in power.

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Worse, our trade woes are entirely sectoral. In a written statement about Canada's trade deficit made last November, BMO chief economist Doug Porter said, "there is energy (doing just fine) and there is everything else (doing anything but fine)". In 2013, Canadian energy exports saw a \$63-billion surplus, while everything else in Canada's economic basket saw a \$73-billion deficit.

Canadians are rightly proud of our energy sector, but a modern, well-diversified economy needs to be firing on all of its cylinders, not just one. The Conservatives want Canadians to trust them when they tell us that they understand the economy. If they do understand economics, Conservatives should admit that these statistics are bad news for a sustainable and prosperous Canadian economy.

As Conservatives should know, a country that runs a sustained current account deficit is building liabilities with the rest of the world, and eventually those liabilities need to be paid back.

According to senior IMF officials, "whether a country should run a current account deficit depends on the extent of its foreign liabilities (its external debt) and on whether the borrowing will finance investment with a higher marginal product than the interest rate...the country has to pay on its foreign liabilities".

Let us think about this for a minute. Canada's foreign debt has never been higher than it is now under the Conservative government. As evidenced by our export performance that I mentioned earlier, the Conservative legacy for Canada amounts to putting all of Canada's economic eggs in a narrow basket.

Canada's productivity has slumped by almost 2% since the Conservatives came to power in 2006. It is also the case that while fluctuations in the current account are tolerable, a chronic sustained current account deficit hurts our economy. According to IMF analysis, these are not the conditions under which a government can justify long-term current account deficits.

It makes one wonder what happens if commodity prices or production drops in Canada's energy sector. With massive Conservative-induced government debt, productivity weakness, and no significant export growth in other sectors, Canada's current account deficit is a problem that the government simply cannot continue to ignore.

That is why our Bank of Canada has singled out Canada's poor export performance as a major cause of Canada's slow growth and lack of well-paying, full-time jobs.

Any investment planner in Canada would advise Canadians to do three things: diversify, diversify, diversify, and deal with chronic deficit.

How can the Conservatives continue to justify their massive current account deficits year after year after year?

• (1915)

**Mr. Erin O'Toole (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my hon. colleague for repeating "diversification" three times in his question, because that strategy shows the underpinnings of our government's approach to trade and our approach to ensuring that we close the current account deficit with respect to trade. We are in the midst of a diversification effort that really is unparalleled. Sadly,

there is no diversification in the NDP's long and multi-generational opposition to trade.

The member mentioned the energy sector and mentioned that everything else is having difficulties. Really, the global recession in 2008 shows why nations have been struggling, particularly in the manufacturing sector. Canadians relied for several generations on our U.S. markets to the south, which had a voracious appetite for pretty much everything we produced as goods and services.

For example, in 2008 our exports to the United States were \$368 billion. Global recession hit. The next year, in 2009, those exports to the United States dropped to \$270 billion as a result of the crisis. Statistics in 2012 show that important and critical relationship regrowing for Canada, but those export levels remained at around 10% below the pre-recession levels. It is important to note the consistency on the NDP's side with respect to the U.S. free trade agreement and ultimately NAFTA: that party opposed both of those agreements.

One in five jobs in Canada is attributable to trade, and 40,000 small, medium, and large Canadian enterprises are exporters. Our global commerce strategy, which was reinvigorated and strategically focused in November of last year into the global markets action plan, is addressing the need for new markets. I will show why, because my friend used some statistics.

The period between 2009 and 2013 is a result of our diversification effort. U.S. export growth is recovering. Traditional markets like the United Kingdom are up 16%; Mexico, our NAFTA partner, is up by 13%. However, importantly, new and emerging markets around the world are up as well. They include China, up 84%, and Hong Kong, up 229%. Through our global markets action plan, this government takes a strategic approach to grow new markets so that Canadian employers can sell our best goods and services in new and growing markets.

There are markets where we have had drops. Germany is down 7% and South Korea shows a drop of 3%, mainly because the U.S. and other countries have free trade agreements with South Korea. I am happy to say the European trade deal agreement in principle will address some of our gaps in Europe, and our negotiations with South Korea, which I urge my hon. colleague to support, will address the trade drop with South Korea that exists because of our competitive disadvantage to our competitors. As we have signed free trade agreements, trade with those countries has grown exponentially because of our work in diversifying. Exports to Colombia have grown by 22%, to Peru by 42%, and to Switzerland by 48%.

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## RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Clearly our government has shown through the global markets action plan that we are going to target key areas and key industries where we can sell our world-class goods and services not just to our traditional trading partners here in North America but in important growing economies around the world. I truly hope that my friend and colleague from the trade committee urges his colleagues in the NDP to stop their party's decades-long opposition to trade and to recognize the opportunities for Canadian employers under our global markets action plan.

● (1920)

**Mr. Don Davies:** Mr. Speaker, in the statistics that my friend raised it is interesting that the highest percentage increase in trade comes with those countries that we do not have trade agreements with, China and Hong Kong. That speaks to some flaws in the current neoliberal trade template that I would urge my friend to take a look at.

We have trade-related problems in this country, and all the rhetoric in the world will not change that. We have had record-breaking current account deficits five years in a row. We have record-breaking foreign debt. We have a hollowed-out economy. We have low productivity. As well, we must remember that all liabilities caused by these recurring current account deficits need to be paid back. This raises an important question about process.

American and European trade negotiators are releasing trade text to legislators and the public. Why does the government insist on secrecy when our allies choose transparency? Does it have something to hide? With all this bad news about trade in Canada, Canadians need to know that the Conservatives are being watched on the trade file. Canadians deserve checks and balances in our trade negotiations to ensure they do not get another bad deal from the Conservative government.

Are the Conservatives afraid to be transparent with Canadians because their government's trade performance, objectively, is so poor?

**Mr. Erin O'Toole:** Mr. Speaker, it is late in the evening here in this place, but I am optimistic because the member did focus on our growing trade with Asia. Specifically, he mentioned China. I take that as a sign that perhaps my friend will talk to his colleagues about the importance of foreign investment protection and promotion agreements that secure legal certainty and rights for Canadian exporters in parts of the world where such rights do not yet exist. A FIPA with China would provide Canadian employers, people who employ people in his riding and mine, some certainty.

I am optimistic that the hon. member is turning the page with his caucus and that they will support the foreign investment protection and promotion agreement with China when it comes due.

The European Union's ambassador to Canada highlighted the exceptional amount of sector and regional overview that we have provided on the European trade deal, saying that she uses our materials to talk about the agreement.

I hope to see my colleague tomorrow as we get an update from departmental officials on the trans-Pacific partnership discussions.

**Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, GP):** Mr. Speaker, Canada's national transportation system is deteriorating, and that is hurting our economy. Passenger rail is in jeopardy, and three successive Conservative transportation ministers have neglected to enforce the Canada Transportation Act and the Railway Safety Act.

When rail infrastructure deteriorates, federal rail and transport agencies are not even empowered to fix anything. They can only tell trains to slow down or get off the track altogether. Too many of our railways have slow or stop orders, holding up grain shipments and VIA Rail passengers.

The Minister of Transport is the only person with the power to order that the federal railways be maintained or upgraded. Rail companies only invest the minimum amount to maintain the railways for the services that help their bottom line. New businesses cannot invest, and existing companies cannot adapt quickly.

The Conservative government, like the Liberal government before it, has brushed off private sector innovation to revitalize Canada's railways. With business development at a standstill, more crucial railway lines are being cut permanently.

We no longer have the capacity to handle additional service when needed on short notice, so our grain shipments are held up. More available routes would give us this ability. Instead, we are losing those options. Sir John A. Macdonald must be shaking his head to see his visionary investment now in jeopardy under today's Conservatives.

Rail safety is in a needlessly tragic state in Canada. Many lives have been lost in recent months to derailments and disasters. The government has allowed rail carriers to self-regulate and has granted them exemptions from carrying adequate brakes or even testing the brakes. Self-regulation is not working.

Last year, the Auditor General reported that Transport Canada has too few safety auditors and that its inspectors are poorly trained. He said that Canadians do not even have a "minimum level of assurance" that the railways are complying with safety rules. What is more, passenger rail has never been in a worse state. We are on the brink of losing coast to coast service altogether. Canada remains the only G20 nation with no national rail strategy.

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I did a whistle-stop tour through the Maritimes this past weekend, through Bathurst, Miramichi, Campbellton, Amherst, Truro, and smaller towns in-between that need that Ocean train. However, passenger service connecting the rest of Canada and Nova Scotia and New Brunswick is now in jeopardy because CN Rail is abandoning 71 kilometres of track between Miramichi and Bathurst.

In addition, the Minister of Transport says that she is not willing to spend the \$10 million to take over this stretch of track. Why not? Far more federal money was spent in buying sections of track in southern Ontario to preserve VIA Rail service there. The minister just says that private industry can do what it wants.

Why are the Maritimes being marginalized? Enough of this mismanagement and lack of common sense. Will the Minister of Transport provide the House with information on all of the railways that have been discontinued since the Conservatives took power in 2006, and take control of any abandoned section of rail line that VIA Rail needs to operate a coast to coast service? At long last, will the minister table a national rail strategy in the House?

• (1925)

**Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC):** Mr. Speaker, there was a whole lot there in the member's question. The member raised a lot of different topics, everything from rail safety to VIA Rail. I think the focus toward the end was a little more on the VIA Rail side.

The member will know that our government provides significant funding to support passenger rail services. For example, in 2012–13, our government provided VIA Rail, a crown corporation that operates at arm's length from the government, with \$275 million across its network for passenger rail services to Canadians.

In addition, since 2006, we have invested about \$1 billion in capital funding, supporting projects on everything from station upgrades to rail car refurbishment and track improvements. I will note that the member opposite opposed all of that funding, at every turn.

On the specific rail line mentioned in New Brunswick, the member will know, the government has said it has no intention to buy the track. CN has indicated its plans to advertise it for sale. Instead, our role is to provide a legislative framework that encourages stakeholders to seek commercial solutions to address the discontinuance of rail lines.

The Canada Transportation Act actually lays out the process that railways must follow if they want to stop service on those lines. The line transfer or discontinuance provisions in the Canada Transportation Act are aimed at encouraging the retention of rail lines, where it makes sense to do so, by giving other railways or other interested parties the opportunity to continue railway operations.

While the discontinuance process is under way, CN will continue to be responsible for maintaining the rail line and ensuring the service is not disrupted. If CN does complete the discontinuance process for this portion of track, VIA Rail, as an independent crown corporation, will have to make its own decision about passenger rail services in New Brunswick.

Our government is obviously going to continue to monitor that particular circumstance.

I want to address the issue of rail safety. The minister has taken a number of very important actions related to rail safety. Our government has taken a number of actions consistently for a number of years.

We have invested over \$100 million in our rail safety system. We continue to hire inspectors for inspections across the country. Last year alone, we did a record 30,000 traditional inspections of everything from track to equipment, and that is in addition to the inspections that railway companies themselves are required to do, by the way.

We brought in important whistleblower protection so that employees who may see something that goes contrary to the rules will have the immunity they need to be able to report those types of incidents, and new administrative monetary penalties to increase the suite of compliance mechanisms available to Transport Canada officials at the conclusion of investigations so they can look at how to penalize infractions. That makes the system far more robust.

I could go on and on. There are information-sharing protocols with first responders in municipalities, and new permanent rules were put in place for the original emergency directive, post Lac-Mégantic. We are following the recommendations of the Transportation Safety Board.

I could go on and on about how we continue to do more rail safety. The last point I will make is that while we are trying to get our committee out to places like Lac-Mégantic, so we can find more things to improve rail safety in this country, opposition members continue to hold up that important committee travel.

• (1930)

**Mr. Bruce Hyer:** Mr. Speaker, the fact is, funding to VIA Rail has been cut 62% in the last two years.

Just last weekend, I rode VIA Rail from Halifax to Sainte Foy. Recently cut from six to three times per week, that train may soon be gone. Over 500 people came out to protest and to talk with me; 130 in Halifax, over 200 in Moncton, and over 150 in Campbellton at 10 o'clock at night. There were seniors who can't drive in the winter, students who travel to university, and cancer patients who travel to hospital.

They are angry that they voted for Conservative MPs who now refuse to fight for them and their train. They are angry at spineless or self-serving MPs who say pretty things in their ridings but refuse to actually represent them in Ottawa. They asked—

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** Order, please. We do not take points of order in the course of adjournment proceedings.

I am sure all hon. members recall that characterizations of other hon. members get us into a territory that can be a slippery slope. Obviously, we encourage all hon. members to use language that is appropriate to the context of the debate.

The hon. member for Thunder Bay—Superior North.

**Mr. Bruce Hyer:** Mr. Speaker, I am just repeating what those people told me. They are angry at what they call self-serving MPs who say pretty things in their ridings but refuse to actually represent them here in Ottawa. They asked why a Green MP from Thunder Bay is supporting them while Conservative and Liberal MPs are missing in action. They made it clear that if the government continues to marginalize the Maritimes, the maritime voters will be seeking a new government.

**Mr. Jeff Watson:** Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for sinking to an all-time new low with respect to a Green Party intervention in this House with that horrible rant and personal attack against members of Parliament, when the member knows that the honour of members in this House is presumed. To use the words he

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did, while they may not be unparliamentary, was certain undignified. He should retract those remarks. I will give him an opportunity at some point over the coming days to do so.

The House can rest assured that every investment that has been made over the last number of years in the VIA Rail network has been supported by every member of this Conservative caucus, including members from New Brunswick. The member has been missing in action every single time. He stands up and puts his vote in the opposite direction. He should be ashamed of his record. We are certainly proud of ours.

[*Translation*]

**The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton):** The motion to adjourn the House is now deemed to have been adopted. Accordingly, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow at 10 a.m., pursuant to Standing Order 24(1).

(The House adjourned at 7:34 p.m.)





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