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(HANSARD)

Monday, March 24, 2014

—

Speaker: The Honourable Andrew Scheer

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HOUSE OF COMMONS

Monday, March 24, 2014

The House met at 11 a.m.

there are multiple counts, multiple methodologies, multiple criteria, and not insignificantly, multiple agendas.

Prayers

• (1105)

[*Translation*]

VACANCY

TRINITY—SPADINA

The Speaker: It is my duty to inform the House that a vacancy has occurred in the representation, namely:

[*English*]

Ms. Chow, member for the electoral district of Trinity—Spadina, has submitted her resignation effective Thursday, March 13, 2014. Pursuant to paragraph 25(1)(b) of the Parliament of Canada Act, I have addressed my warrant to the Chief Electoral Officer for the issue of a writ for the election of a member to fill this vacancy.

A national point in time would remove confusions surrounding counts of Canadian homeless people presently being done by municipalities, by establishing common definitions, common methodology, and a common count date. It would use the best practices introduced in the United States by the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the U.S. intergovernmental agency on homeless to ensure a national point in time. To maximize accuracy of the homeless count and statistical analysis so that both countries can collaborate to address concerns, it would provide all levels of government with reasonably accurate data to allow more proper allocation of resources to solving the homeless problem.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' BUSINESS

[*English*]

HOMELESSNESS

Mr. Peter Goldring (Edmonton East, CPC) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, one nationally standardized “point in time” should be recommended for use in all municipalities in carrying out homeless counts, with (a) nationally recognized definitions of who is homeless; (b) nationally recognized methodology on how the count takes place; and (c) the same agreed-upon criteria and methodology in determining who is considered to be homeless.

He said: Mr. Speaker, the wording of my motion is clear:

The motion's objective is to get the right amount of social services resources support to the right people. For example, some might see the motion as an attempt to cut supports to those most in need, but the intent is exactly the opposite. As parliamentarians, we all have a social conscience and an undeniable responsibility to those most disadvantaged, in dire straits and need. If we parliamentarians are to be proper and worthy stewards of taxpayer dollars, we should make sure we are getting value for money by being fiscally responsible.

We should also ensure that we are spending what is needed to address homelessness, such that we maximize the number of persons in need who we help. We can only do that if we know with some level of precision how extensive the problem really is. Right now

The point in time should be established as the last week in January, regardless of local climate factors. This date would minimize the chance of recording those who are merely transient and not truly homeless, those who may choose to live or camp outdoors in warmer weather while visiting the city or visiting friends and family. Major cities frequently have transient warm weather populations who are not truly homeless, but rather, just visiting in the warmer months and saving on accommodation. Many would stay in and pay for low-cost youth hostels, if available, or if allowed to. Many more would camp out and pay if there were any camping spaces in or near the downtown. Few are absolutely homeless. They have homes, but not in Edmonton or whichever city they are visiting.

When counts are done other than in the coldest of weather, many of those counted are visiting, people who do have housing alternatives elsewhere, but for personal reasons are not accessing emergency shelters at that point in time. Counting these people serves to confuse efforts to try to help those who are truly homeless with absolutely no means to attain housing alternatives and are in desperate need.

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Different Canadian cities do their homeless counts at different times, making a statistically accurate number problematic. At present, only the City of Calgary conducts its count in January, as does the entire United States, regardless of climate, with others in Canada being conducted variously in March, April, May, and October. There is a notable, dramatic difference in count numbers of the absolute homeless, those literally on the street, in all of the Canadian cities counted. Examples are Edmonton, which does its count in early October when it is still relatively mild, and Calgary, a city of similar size. It is hard to imagine that there are 64 truly homeless people living outside in the cold in Calgary while Edmonton has a count of 1,070 homeless living outside. When the count is done does make a difference.

The United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, or HUD, states that there must be a common national point in time for counts in the last seven days of the month of January. Further, it states that defining the scope of homelessness has proven controversial since the issue first gained broad public attention during the 1980s. Public debate has revolved around how widely to view the scope of residential instability and how to target scarce resources to address it.

In general, residential stability can be divided into two broad categories of people: those who are literally homeless and those who are precariously housed.

Literally homeless defines the people who, for various reasons, have found it necessary to live in emergency shelters or transitional housing for some period of time. This category also includes unsheltered homeless people who sleep in places not meant for human habitation—for example, streets, parks, abandoned buildings, subway tunnels—and who may also use shelters on an intermittent basis.

The precariously housed are people on the edge of becoming literally homeless, who may be doubled up with friends or relatives or paying extremely high portions of their resources for rent. This group is often characterized as being at imminent risk of becoming homeless.

HUD's assistance program specifically targets persons living in shelters or in places not meant for human habitation but not people in precarious housing situations or couch surfing.

It is important that the literally homeless situations are distinct and separately enumerated from couch surfers or other precariously housed persons and are not included as part of the Canadian homeless count, as the count is to determine the level of government services necessary to assist the truly homeless needs. Some may be at risk of becoming homeless, but while they are couch surfing with family or friends or precariously housed, they can be considered to have a home or have the means and wherewithal to access shelter and are not necessarily a draw on social services.

Prisons, hospitals, and special care treatment centres should also not be included in homeless number counts in Canada. These people should not be considered homeless until they are discharged or voluntarily leave and then may or may not be homeless, depending upon their financial means or their own housing alternatives at that specific time.

We should not be postulating on who may be homeless in the future but concentrating on those who are actually homeless at the present time.

HUD's definition of "chronic homeless" is:

...an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has been continuously homeless for a year or more, OR...has had...four episodes of homelessness in the past three years.

To be considered chronically homeless, persons must have been "sleeping in a place not meant for human habitation (e.g. living on the streets...) OR...in...emergency shelter" during that time.

HUD's definition of an "episode of homelessness" is "...a separate, distinct, and sustained stay on the streets and/or in a homeless emergency shelter".

Now, HUD's definition of "chronic homelessness" does not include families. Families rarely enter the shelter system. They are given immediate accommodation by social services and funding towards more permanent housing rental accommodation. In addition, to be identified as chronically homeless, an individual must have a disabling condition, defined as follows:

...a diagnosable substance abuse disorder, serious mental illness, developmental disability, or chronic physical illness or disability, including the co-occurrence of two or more of these conditions. ...a disabling condition limits an individual's ability to work or perform one or more activities of daily living.

As can be seen, the United States intergovernmental agency on homelessness, while instituting a national point in time definition, recognizes that the chronically homeless are a priority but need to be carefully defined so the maximum of homeless persons can be helped with the limited resources available.

The easy part is to have Parliament approve the principle of point in time legislation. The Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness is calling for national point in time counts and national standards. It is correct in that it is essential to align homeless criteria continent-wide.

The more difficult part is to agree together on the definitions, including when, who, how, and why the counts should be conducted throughout North America.

Also difficult would be to convince Canadian municipalities to accept standardized definitions, fact-based definitions that would provide a common national and international perspective, regardless of local and regional Canadian social welfare variant present models.

There are many contrary agendas afloat. Once an agreement on how to proceed is made, the cost to do so would be minimal or neutral as, presently, the various cities are conducting government-funded counts now.

● (1110)

The Federation of Canadian Municipalities, as well as individual municipal and provincial planning and priorities homelessness groups, are united behind a call for federal money. They claim that the cost to Canada for homelessness is now \$7 billion annually and rising. They say that great savings can be accomplished if the federal government would commit more money. In Edmonton alone, they say, taxpayers will save \$2 billion over 10 years, if they spend only \$1 billion.

The numbers for the present costs are questionably high. Also questionable is the description of the needs of the homeless population, both current and projected, by variant count methodologies and definitions.

Today, it would be very difficult for anyone to argue against reform of the process to better and more accurately direct resources to needs. It is time for real numbers, by nationally and internationally approved standards being employed, to allow our government to continue its good work in helping the vulnerable population.

There is a great need in Canada to step up to our collective awareness and intelligence of the true homelessness situation and that population's needs. Canada should perhaps have an institution that is comparable to the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, to focus on resources needed and to bring about solutions that maximize effort for those in need.

I would like to read where some of the confusion comes in, which is from a book that I brought out in 2000. In six homelessness reports that I reviewed, there were some 36 different definitions of what a homeless person is. Members might like to hear some of those definitions, as follows:

People living in transitional accommodation, ready to be discharged;

People expected to be on the street at the end of this day;

People expected to be on the street in the immediate future;

People having low income;

People having no permanent place to reside;

People staying in a temporary form of situation;

People who have ended up staying with friends;

People living in housing that is extremely expensive;

People living in overcrowded or inadequate housing;

People living in substandard hotels and rooming houses;

People living in housing not within easy reach of employment and costing more than 50% of income;

People who lack privacy, security, and tenant document rights;

People with problems of mental health or social disorganization;

People who are not a member of a stable group;

People paying more than 30% of their income for rent;

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People having no home or permanent place of residence;

People who have the quality and the state of being homeless;

People suffering from the homeless disease.

As members can see, there is a wide variance of opinions on who is homeless, and this manifests itself in one homelessness count after another. Unfortunately, as I said, the homelessness plan developed in Edmonton was to cost \$1 billion over 10 years, and it is doubtful that it will do what it claimed, which is to end homelessness. It would help the homeless people, but \$1 billion, in my opinion, would not be sufficient to end the homeless situation in Edmonton. We need to come up with proper definitions and how to approach it. We need a proper way to count them, so we can be together from one end of the country to the other.

We could also be aligned with what the United States is doing. Many of its northern border states are within 100 or 200 miles of our cities in the southern part of Canada. It is imperative that we too experience it and go forward in sync. Hopefully, Ottawa can work with Washington to come up with progressive plans to help this problem and to help homeless people.

● (1115)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, is the intent of this motion really to focus only on counting the number of people who use shelters or are in the street, or does the member think a more in-depth study should be done, one that includes hidden homelessness, for example among women, since they rarely use shelters?

Indeed, simply enumerating the people who use shelters will give us a very limited view of homelessness, as the member knows. However, a more thorough examination of the problem will give us the big picture. This will help us better target services, and therefore intervention, and will also allow us to focus on prevention, which is so important to really combatting homelessness.

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Goldring: Mr. Speaker, the member is absolutely right. There is obviously more work we can do on a broader scope to find other social problems that we have.

The two sections in the point-in-time count, those who are homeless and not in shelters and those who are in shelters, do not preclude adding other documentation in order to poll other constituencies as well. This has been done in many American cities. However, the two areas that we want to line up with HUD on are the ones without shelter at all and the ones who are staying in shelters. Other issues can be added to the counts.

● (1120)

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the bill being brought forward by my colleague today. He identified very clearly that this is another tool that would help to address the problem of homelessness. I see the merit in supporting this particular bill, which does not try to identify the definitions that are going to be required.

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My question for my colleague is this. Should this bill be successful and pass, does he see the need for the government to broadly consult with those who have been working in this field for many years and who have the expertise? Rather than the government imposing a definition, does he see the necessity for trying to come up with something that works best for those groups that are impacted, to try to advance some solutions for this very important problem?

Mr. Peter Goldring: Mr. Speaker, I agree. That is why I have specifically left the definitions out. That should be done in concert with exploring the reasons that the United States has lined up with the definitions that they use.

As I mentioned to the other member, there may be things we want to add, such as other investigative techniques, in order to Canadianize the count. The two most important ones are those who are living raw, out of the shelters, and those who are living in the shelters. Those are the two statistical numbers that should be common throughout North America.

[*Translation*]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlebourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I wish to congratulate my hon. colleague on having chosen this subject, an issue that our society really needs to address.

I have to wonder about the budget cuts made to the homelessness partnering strategy, or HPS. Between 2014 and 2018, the HPS budget will be cut by a net total of \$15 million a year.

I also have to wonder about what Statistics Canada said, namely that it is extremely difficult to conduct such a study and that it would be terribly expensive. Statistics Canada has reduced previous budgets. Can my colleague tell us how these studies can be conducted and funded?

[*English*]

Mr. Peter Goldring: Mr. Speaker, at present there are homelessness counts done across the country, some every year, and most of them every two years. Therefore, they are already funded. I cannot see where there would be any difference with this type of methodology in doing a count that would cost any more money. If the funding is already being provided by the federal government, I could see that this would cost very little to implement across the country, because counts are being done and funded now.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet (Hochelaga, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today as the official NDP opposition critic on housing and homelessness to speak to Motion No. 455.

This motion addresses the lack of data on homelessness in most Canadian communities and problems caused by using a variety of methods to collect data on homelessness, as my colleague said.

The current wording of the motion refers to carrying out homeless counts only. It does not seek to paint a complete picture of homelessness in Canada, which could contribute to a better understanding of the reasons for the situation, as well as the nature and the scope of homelessness, including the less visible aspects. This could also help with prevention and response actions.

The New Democratic Party believes that the federal government has a major role to play in the fight against homelessness, particularly in terms of the funding required.

I have risen in the House several times to ask the government to take the necessary action to make fighting homelessness a priority for Canada.

Specifically, I have asked the Conservatives to index funding for the homelessness partnering strategy, the HPS, which has become increasingly underfunded over the years because of the rising costs of services and salaries.

Unfortunately, in the 2013-14 budget, the government only partially renewed funding for the HPS, cutting \$15.5 million from a budget that was already too small to meet the needs.

I have also asked the government to review the new approach that it unilaterally imposed on the provinces and municipalities, an approach that shifts most of the funding for homelessness to programs that focus on housing.

Radio silence there too. The ministers have been trained to deliver all kinds of lines, but they never answer our questions. Far be it from me to say that we should not make it a priority to provide housing to the homeless.

I strongly believe that eliminating poverty starts with ensuring that all people have a roof over their heads. However, for years now, I have been criticizing the government's hypocrisy on issues related to housing and homelessness.

This government is bragging all the way to the United States that housing has all of a sudden become a priority, simply because the government is changing its approach to combatting homelessness by focusing primarily on housing and allocating a paltry \$119 million per year to this issue. What the government is not saying is that from 2011 to 2013 alone, it saved \$65.2 million by refusing to renew funding for long-term social housing agreements that were set to expire and that, by so doing, the government will have cut over \$1.7 billion to the detriment of the most underprivileged members of our society by 2030.

We will see what direction the government wants to take when we debate Motion No. 450 on federal funding for social housing.

The NDP recognizes the problems related to the lack of data on homelessness in most Canadian communities and the variety of data collection methods. More accurate data on homelessness in Canada would help in the development of better prevention and intervention practices.

In that sense, the motion is a step in the right direction because it will provide a more informed view of homelessness in Canada.

According to the letter I recently received from the motion's sponsor, he intends to count only the number of people who use homeless shelters. That is a major problem because this method completely ignores less visible homeless people, those who do not use any services and who could be helped before they become chronically homeless. In other words, prevention is completely ignored.

From 2005 to 2009, the National Shelter Study analyzed national data collected annually in order “to establish a baseline count and description of the characteristics of the homeless population in Canada”.

With regard to the findings of this study, Stephen Gaetz, a recognized expert in the field of homelessness, said:

While this approximation gives us a good baseline estimate of shelter users, it does not tell the whole story. As Segaert points out, the study did not include individuals in transitional housing (for individuals or families), Violence Against Women shelters and second-stage housing, immigrant/refugee shelters, halfway houses or temporary shelters (e.g. for extreme weather).

• (1125)

Take, for example, homeless women. That phenomenon is not as noticeable and it is very poorly documented because women do not use shelters as often. If the motion limits the counts to shelters, the issue of female homelessness and possible ways of preventing it will not even be considered.

If the motion is intended to go beyond a simple census, it could contribute to a better understanding of the reasons for the situation, as well as the nature and the scope of homelessness among women—and other forms of less visible homelessness—and it could also help shape prevention and response methods.

We also believe that the definition of “homeless” must be broad enough to include homeless individuals who are less visible, despite the difficulties that may entail. The motion is silent on that front, and in his letter, the member for Edmonton East clearly states his intention to include only chronically or episodically homeless people who are ill or have another debilitating condition. Someone who has been homeless for 11 months because he lost his job would not be counted.

The NDP believes that it is important to involve the groups fighting against homelessness and other levels of government in determining the definition of who is “homeless”, the methodology on how the count takes place and the “point in time” that will be used to that end, in order to prevent Conservative unilateralism.

What exactly is meant by “agreed-upon”? Unlike our colleagues opposite, the NDP believes in consultation, not in imposing criteria that groups fighting homelessness do not agree with. They are the ones out there, doing the work.

Speaking of unilateralism, we would like to know which version of Motion No. 455 actually reflects the sponsor's intentions. The French version states the following:

Que, de l'avis de la Chambre, il faudrait recommander à toutes les municipalités qui recensent les sans-abris [which implies those that are already carrying out counts] une « période de référence » normalisée à l'échelle nationale qui soit assortie [...]

However, the English version seems to involve everyone in the process.

• (1130)

[English]

That, in the opinion of the House, one nationally standardized “point in time” should be recommended for use in all municipalities in carrying out homeless counts...

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[Translation]

Are we going to ask all the municipalities to carry out such homeless counts or are we simply going to standardize the definition and methodology for the municipalities that already carry out homeless counts? We have to decide because the translation is ambiguous.

In any case, the NDP, like many groups and associations directly or indirectly fighting homelessness, believes that the costs involved in implementing this motion should not be covered by the municipalities, or taken out of the direct transfers or the homelessness partnering strategy budget, which are already inadequate for preventing and properly dealing with homelessness.

The Conservatives are masters at the art of getting other levels of government to pay for their policies. The municipalities already have limited financial resources, which are likely to become even more limited when the new building Canada fund and its new conditions come into effect. As for the provinces, they have already paid enough for Conservative policies since the Conservatives came to power. We believe this practice must end.

Despite claims to the contrary by the sponsor of the motion, the bill could be quite high. In 2001, at the request of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada, Statistics Canada published the *Survey of Homelessness in Canada: Street Component Feasibility Study*, which dealt with the feasibility of conducting a homelessness count in a number of Canadian cities. The author of the report found that such a comprehensive count would be prohibitively expensive, roughly \$10 million Canadian, and present important methodological challenges, with no guarantee that the data would be reliable.

We support the principle of this motion, but a number of details have to be clarified. I urge my colleague from Edmonton East to seriously consider my comments if he wants my support and that of my colleagues, and if he wants to show that the fight against homelessness is truly important to him. A much more complete picture of the situation and action on prevention are needed in this fight.

[English]

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I am happy to join in this debate today. As a frame for my comments, I am just back from Fort McMurray, Alberta. I was there for three days last week. I had the opportunity to live there for nine years back in the 1980s and early 1990s.

When we talk about measurement and trying to find ways to address whatever the issue or problem might be, I think it is fairly commonly accepted that if we can measure it, then we can work toward addressing it.

One of the things that jumped out at me is that it has always been a problem to measure the population in Fort McMurray because it is so transient. In any particular community, a relatively small house may have six vehicles parked outside. There may be nieces and nephews staying on the chesterfield, or maybe a bedroom has been rented out. It is really tough to get a hard count.

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In my meetings with the Fort McMurray council, I learned that water consumption is now being used as the measurement. There is a Canadian standard that if a municipality consumes a certain amount of water, so many gallons per year, then this number probably represents the population. That is the measurement.

If the head count shows about 110,000 people living there, then the infrastructure may be adequate. However, the amount of water being consumed shows that in reality about 150,000 people are living in Fort McMurray. Without question, that puts additional demands on the infrastructure.

The point is that it is important to have a good count so that problems can be addressed. As my friend and colleague from Scarborough said, counting counts, and never more importantly so than with this issue of homelessness.

Homelessness researchers estimate at least 200,000 Canadians access homeless emergency services or sleep outside in a given year, including 30,000 on any given night. The problem of homelessness is real for the people suffering from it and real in terms of the social and economic costs to society and government that must deal with it.

As Liberals, we have always believed in an evidence-based approach to understanding a problem and creating solutions. That is why we will be supporting Motion No. 455.

Although the intention of Motion No. 455 is to help stakeholders understand the scope and depth of homelessness, everyone must realize that it is a very small piece of the homelessness puzzle. Having a government that is committed to a long-term strategy to ending homelessness through homelessness prevention and affordable housing programs is most important.

We must also realize that this motion is a recommendation. It is not a requirement for municipalities. It deals with the need for, and not the proposing of, a homelessness definition or count methodology. I want to be clear that any definition of homelessness or of a methodology for homelessness counts must be done in collaboration and co-operation with academic experts and advocacy groups to give legitimacy and buy-in on the process.

As pointed out by the Canadian Homelessness Research Network, homelessness is not an individual crisis but instead refers to “the failure of society to ensure that adequate systems, funding and support are in place so that all people, even in crisis situations, have access to housing”.

The problem with solving the issue is not that we do not have enough stats; it is that we do not have a government willing to commit to what would truly have an effect on reducing the problem of homelessness. Advocates, academic experts, and stakeholders know that we need two things: homelessness prevention programs and a national affordable housing strategy. Those are two very key components.

• (1135)

However, staying focused on this motion, I would like to make a few points as to why most experts agree that a common definition of homelessness is important.

The rationale for a common definition is quite simple. As the research network has stated, a common definition provides all levels of government and community groups with a framework for understanding and describing homelessness as well as a means for identifying goals, strategies, and interventions and for measuring outcomes and progress. The research network created a definition two years ago, and seeking widespread consensus on that definition would be a good place to start. The research network felt a common definition was necessary for a number of reasons, including sharing a common language about homelessness, being able to enumerate the problem, evaluating outcomes and progress, and coordinating responses to the issue.

Point-in-time counts have had many critics over the past two and a half decades since groups interested in homelessness began trying to measure it. One of the biggest criticisms is that the counts underestimate the number of homeless people because of the how—that being the methodology, or how the count gets done—and the who, that being who gets counted. This has been the result of many factors, including having no consistent manner or accepted methodology, incomplete surveying of the area, and only counting the visible homeless, to name a few.

We must all recognize that point-in-time counts inherently undercount the number of homeless. As such, they must not be viewed as a complete measurement of the homeless but rather as a tool to measure just one aspect. That point was brought up by the NDP member who spoke earlier.

Many critics still feel point-in-time counts consume a lot of time and a lot of money for little useful and reliable information. That said, many of these critics admit that point-in-time counts are better than nothing. They are in no way perfect, nor are they close to 100% accurate. However, a point-in-time count based on a nationally recognized definition and methodology would provide much better data on the size, composition, and trends in the homeless population that presently exists.

In addition, they could help in identifying such useful information as the number of shelter beds required; the food and water needs of the homeless; the physical and mental health needs of the homeless, and proper services to meet these needs; the special needs of specific groups, such as women, children, youth, aboriginal, or immigrant groups; and the number of subsidized and supportive housing units required.

As I indicated through my comments, our party does not think, nor does the sponsor of Motion No. 455 believe, that this would be the be-all and end-all. I totally agree with my colleague that this is an important initiative. It would serve stakeholders well should the motion be successful. If the many academics and stakeholders across this country have an opportunity to engage in this issue and come together on it, it would provide all levels of government and all stakeholders with something very worthwhile in their work.

• (1140)

Mr. Brad Butt (Mississauga—Streetsville, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is indeed a pleasure to participate in this debate on Motion No. 455, which has been introduced by my good friend and colleague, the hon. member for Edmonton East.

The intention of this motion is quite clear. It states that one nationally standardized “point in time” count should be recommended for use in all municipalities in carrying out counts of homeless individuals in their communities. Motion No. 455 recommends the development of nationally recognized methods governing how the count should be carried out.

To put it more simply, my colleague has brought forward this motion so that the government can help provide the tools to improve and to standardize the way we count homeless people in Canada.

Currently, various methods are being used in different communities, which can be a problem. This motion would provide the opportunity to improve our programs and better target our resources. It would be a tool for municipalities and communities to gain a better understanding of the homeless population, what situation these people are in, and what challenges they face.

Given the complexity of homelessness, our Conservative government launched the homelessness partnering strategy in 2007, known as the HPS, with the goal of preventing and reducing homelessness in Canada. Last year, as part of economic action plan 2013, we announced an investment of almost \$600 million over five years to renew the very successful HPS. HPS funding is delivered to 61 communities, as well as to aboriginal, rural, and remote communities.

One of the great strengths of the HPS is that it encourages cooperation between governments, agencies, local community organizations, and the private sector. The HPS allows each of these communities to determine its own specific needs and develop projects to meet them. I saw that first-hand when I was working in Toronto, with the City. I saw the excellent programs it was running, funded by the HPS. Each community must have an advisory board representing these types of stakeholders. They set the priorities and recommend projects for their communities.

What we know is that this partnership and approach work. For every dollar that we have invested, over two dollars has been invested by partners, including other levels of government, community stakeholders, and the private and non-profit sectors. We know that real solutions to homelessness can only be found through these partnerships within our communities.

I am proud to report that through the efforts of the HPS and its partners, thousands of homeless individuals have secured stable housing, found jobs, returned to school, and become fully participating members of Canadian society.

In economic action plan 2013, we announced the renewal of the HPS, using an evidence-based approach with the measurable and proven results known as “Housing First”. Housing First involves moving homeless individuals to immediate and permanent housing, then offering supports to keep them housed. Once stable housing is obtained, the focus shifts to addressing more ongoing issues, such as addictions or mental health. As a result, individuals are able to get

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their lives back on track and become self-sufficient and fully participating members of our communities.

Evidence shows that Housing First can be effective in reducing chronic homelessness, and makes better use of public dollars by reducing pressure on other shelter, health, and justice services.

• (1145)

Through the At Home/Chez Soi project, Canadians now have made-in-Canada evidence that the Housing First approach really works. Over a 12-month period, Housing First participants spent an average of 73% of their time in stable housing, compared to only 30% for homeless people in a control group. I am quite familiar with the success of this program from my previous role as the president of the Greater Toronto Apartment Association, working very closely with the Mental Health Commission of Canada and other excellent stakeholders within Toronto that made this project the success that it is.

I mentioned earlier that one of our main goals is to reduce the number of homeless people in the country and, if possible, eliminate homelessness altogether. How will we know that the numbers are going down if we do not have a baseline to refer to because we are not using an efficient and standardized method of counting? This is why our government is supportive of this motion to move toward a standard point-in-time count approach, also known as the PIT count. A standardized approach would facilitate efforts to create a more comprehensive national picture of sheltered and unsheltered homelessness in Canada. Communities would be required to measure the results of those efforts to reduce homelessness by conducting PIT counts. This data would help to determine whether homelessness is being effectively reduced at the community level.

The approach described by my colleague, the member for Edmonton East, would help to achieve this goal. Indeed, the proposed point-in-time count approach would better equip communities to assess the extent of homelessness. Such a method can also establish a baseline level of homelessness in designated HPS communities across Canada. Communities across Canada would be able to use this method to track, at a given point in time, both the number of people staying in shelters and the number living on the streets. This way they could obtain quantitative data that they could work with to address local needs and better deliver services.

I am asking all of my colleagues to consider Motion No. 455 and how it would help us direct our money where it could do the most good: helping the most vulnerable people in Canada. I ask all members of the House to support Motion No. 455 so we can continue to do work to help alleviate and eliminate homelessness in Canada.

• (1150)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach (Beauharnois—Salaberry, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in front of my dear colleagues and the members of the House, I would like to start my speech by paying tribute to all those fighting for a better life and for a better future.

Private Members' Business

Homelessness is not a status or a predestined state. It is a difficult situation that can befall any one of us, and from which one can escape. Many people have done it. They turned their lives around because they wanted to and because they got the help they needed. Solidarity and compassion are Canadian values. Those values and open-mindedness should guide our discussion.

The motion being debated today calls for a homeless count in Canada. It is certainly an important tool to better understand and better help the homeless. However, counting the number of people who are homeless is not enough.

We need a set of measures to find a long-term solution to this problem. That is what the NDP wants. In a society as rich as ours, we cannot accept that people are sleeping in the streets and are left to fend for themselves. That is not acceptable. As the late Jack Layton said in his book, *Homelessness: The Making and Unmaking of a Crisis*, homelessness is the consequence of a lack of justice, support, solidarity and responsibility on the part of society as a whole. The lack of social services and health services, the shortage of affordable housing, the government's disengagement, the indifference of people around us, all these factors have resulted in the phenomenon of homelessness.

When the Conservative government slashes public programs and institutions that our predecessors took such a long time to create, it is setting a very poor example for Canadian society. It is sending the message that individualism, the power of money, "everyone for themselves" and "not in my backyard" are more important considerations than the fundamental values on which a country such as Canada is built. That is not at all acceptable and it is not responsible.

It is wrong for elected officials to be promoting these toxic and dangerous ideas. It is up to all of us to say that this is not the society we want in Canada. Counting the homeless will not help find a solution to the problem over the long term. We need to look at things another way. We need to ask questions, listen, hear, see and, especially, take action and respond.

People in my riding of Beauharnois—Salaberry work very hard to help others in need. Poverty and aimlessness do not discriminate. Homelessness in my riding affects people of all ages, men, women, anglophones, francophones, aboriginal persons, allophones, children and teens.

In Salaberry-de-Valleyfield, people from the city and from the country, from Ontario and even from the United States are asking us for help. Maison d'Hébergement Dépannage de Valleyfield and Pacte de rue are two organizations that assist people without a fixed address. Maison d'Hébergement Dépannage de Valleyfield has twenty or so people a day coming to them for emergency assistance.

According to its director, André Couillard, there are many causes of homelessness: a difficult personal situation, an eviction, drug addiction, illness, isolation, financial problems, and so on. Everyone's situation is different. More than 70% of the people who are housed at this shelter are there for the first time and do not return. Why is that? It is because this temporary housing gives them access to services and care that helps them escape the homelessness trap.

What they need more than anything is not shelter, it is someone to listen to them, support them and help them.

Pacte de rue connects people who are in distress with emergency services. The organization provides assistance and shelter for the people who need it. Claude Théorêt, the director of Pacte de rue, says that 6,000 people a year are in need of emergency services in the Beauharnois—Salaberry region. Pacte de rue keeps statistics on the people who use its services and has developed a profile of the people needing assistance, the reasons for their distress and the services they need. Mr. Théorêt has determined that some causes of homelessness include increased poverty in Beauharnois—Salaberry, deinstitutionalization, the lack of social and health care services, domestic violence and the lack of affordable housing.

These experts on the ground tell us that homelessness is a growing phenomenon and that there are not enough resources to meet people's needs. The federal government changed the homelessness partnering strategy, the HPS. Nobody knows if the program will be renewed in two years. Not everyone agrees with the new focus on housing. There is no long-term funding. Many organizations in my region have had to make do with less. For example, Pacte de rue withdrew from the HPS so that other organizations could get additional housing spots.

•(1155)

Everyone is in belt-tightening mode, even homelessness organizations.

In my riding, things are even harder for people living on the streets in towns far from urban centres, in rural areas, where 29 of the 31 municipalities in my riding are located. People find beds for a couple of nights here, a couple there, in various centres. They are removed from their communities and given beds in different places. They often have to move on to a different shelter when there is a bed shortage. For people in crisis who need stability and personalized help, that is really not ideal.

Homeless people need more than just access to permanent, stable housing. The most important thing they need is professional medical and psychological help. Many of them need a social worker. For example, teenagers need specialized resources to help them take control of their lives and to keep them out of criminal organizations. They also need safe places to escape family violence. More than anything, people need support, and that means they need people, not just housing.

The most important question is this: why carry out a count? What will this information be used for? Will the count help better target resources for homeless people? Will it give us a better picture of people in distress and their needs? Will it give us the big picture, as my hon. colleague from Hochelaga said earlier?

The Statistics Canada feasibility study on conducting such count in Canada estimated that it would cost at least \$10 million. How do the Conservatives plan to pay for this count? Will they take that money away from programs that provide funding for services to the homeless? Do we run the risk of once again penalizing the people who need help the most?

An important challenge that also needs to be considered is this: homelessness is an ever-changing problem. For most people, homelessness is a temporary situation, as shown by many studies done in Vancouver, Calgary and Toronto. There is also the fact that homelessness takes many forms. Some people sleep in the streets, others in emergency shelters, others seek temporary accommodations with friends or acquaintances, while still others find accommodations in unsafe places and risk being thrown out.

The Canadian Homelessness Research Network believes that homelessness is not a static state, but rather a fluid experience, where one's shelter circumstances and options may shift and change quite dramatically and with frequency. The Statistics Canada feasibility study also found that the methodological challenges would be significant, with no assurance that the data would be reliable.

Claude Théorêt from Pacte de rue believes it is crucial to focus on resources and services. His experience on the ground has shown that people in distress who get the help they need manage to escape extreme homelessness, often for good. The young people he has helped found safe places to live and were also able to choose the path that was right for them. People with mental health issues received the care they needed and were able to relearn how to live independently, and more importantly, with dignity.

The federal government, the provinces, municipalities and all Canadians have an important role to play in combatting homelessness. The federal government must show leadership and provide the necessary funding so that people can get the services they need.

Providing funding to social services and health care would be an effective preventative approach to helping people without a home. The federal government must also reinvest in affordable housing so that low-income Canadians have adequate and proper housing.

Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which Canada signed, states that every individual has the right to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including housing.

The right to safe housing has a significant impact on the health and safety of Canadians. It is a fundamental right. We need to do everything we can to make homelessness a relic of this country's past. This is possible, but we must also think about funding for support workers, as was mentioned earlier, to ensure that every Canadian is safe and that they can receive the help they need to live an independent, dignified life.

The principle of this motion is commendable, but I hope that the sponsor of Motion No. 455 will consider all of the issues raised by the NDP so that the motion can be improved and so that we can work to eliminate homelessness in Canada for everyone, not just for a portion of those living that reality right now.

● (1200)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): 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.

Business of Supply

[English]

Since today is the final allotted day for the supply period ending March 26, 2014, the House will go through the usual procedures to consider and dispose of the supply bills.

In view of recent practices, do hon. members agree that the bills be distributed now?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[Translation]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE ELECTIONS ACT

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP) moved:

That, in the opinion of the House, proposed changes to the Elections Act that would prohibit vouching, voter education programming by Elections Canada, and the use of voter cards as identification could disenfranchise many Canadians, particularly first-time voters like youth and new Canadians, Aboriginal Canadians and seniors living in residence, and should be abandoned.

He said: Mr. Speaker, I will begin by saying that I will be sharing my time with the member for Louis-Saint-Laurent.

[English]

Let me begin today's opposition day by stating flat out that our electoral democracy is in serious danger as a consequence of a bill before the House, Bill C-23, the fair elections act, which I think almost everybody who knows anything about the act is now calling the unfair elections act. Conservatives and the Minister of State (Democratic Reform) are, frankly, relying on Canadians' busy lives and complacency about the state of our democracy to ram legislation through the House. They are also hoping for media silence in order to pull off what I would call a kind of Westminster-majority-government coup. Effectively, that is what we are looking at.

Let me also remind everyone of a baseline fact, which is that the right to vote is one of the most fundamental rights in our Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Supreme Court has made clear that statute law needs to be oriented, not only in its enactment but in its interpretation, to enfranchisement, not to the opposite. The right to vote is not even subject to the notwithstanding clause, whereas other important rights, like equality rights, are. This underlines how very foundational and fundamental the right to vote is in our society.

I am going to state flat out a couple of overarching premises about this bill before arguing about the elements we want Conservative MPs, in good faith, to vote with us on today, namely, to get rid of three elements in this bill that are, frankly, atrocities.

Business of Supply

Overall, Bill C-23 is a calculated effort and intricate tapestry to do two things. One, for ideological or perhaps for sound philosophical reasons, is to enact a set of principles that are unfair, frankly. Perhaps not from the perspective of the minister and his supporters, but standing alone, without looking at any partisan advantage, this bill is full of unfairness.

Everybody knows, and we would be blind if we did not notice and remiss if we did not mention, that this is also a bill designed to secure strategic partisan advantage for the party that lies behind the government. The two interact. There is no doubt that a lot of my colleagues in the House have bought certain lines and spin from the government and the minister to try to keep this in the philosophical realm and to try to ignore how much of an attempt this is to hijack democracy. I ask them now, and will ask again at the end of my remarks, to please know that Canadians are watching and will notice what they do on this incredibly important bill.

The bill would do four major things, in clusters. There are tons of points I could draw attention to. However, in clusters, this is what the bill does that is so incredibly unfair.

First, it engages in the result, and now, because that result is so clearly known, by intention, of voter suppression. The primary devices for this would be getting rid of the voter identification methods of vouching and the use of voter information cards as authorized by the Chief Electoral Officer.

Second, it is an active attempt to encourage voter apathy and disengagement, with perhaps the single most important factor being getting rid of Elections Canada's public education and outreach mandate in an incredibly brutal way.

Third, it either does not add the necessary tools to enhance the investigative functions and powers of Elections Canada, in particular the Commissioner of Canada Elections, or it actually undermines the investigative power of Elections Canada while simultaneously flipping to a focus away from organized fraud of the sort we are all concerned about, and have been for years, which we all thought was going to be tackled in this bill. It changes the focus from that fraud to a mythical narrative of citizen fraud. Fourth, and finally, it jacks up big money politics in a big way.

● (1205)

I want to come back to the third point, which ties together the questions of voter suppression and the lack of a serious tackling of schemes like the automated robocall scandal from 2011. Effectively before this bill came down, Canadian society and the House had trained a telescope on the government, demanding a bill that would deal adequately and seriously with the above by giving new investigative powers to Elections Canada to deal with the robocall scheme and anything like it. Instead, that telescope has been turned around. The government is looking back at average Canadians and saying that Canadians are the potential source of fraud, and not just them, but also the 200,000 election day workers who try to do their job as best they can every election and yet are now being blamed for a fictional situation of fraud in this country.

The NDP members have been doing what they can and I think Canadians would expect no less. Once they become aware of the bill and what it contained, almost to a person they were deeply

concerned about it. They would never forgive us, and we would never forgive ourselves, if we were not taking the fight to the government on the bill in the way we have been doing because, frankly, as I have said before, some foundational elements of our democracy are at stake.

The efforts have been bearing fruit. Civil society stood up to the plate early on and has continued to do so. Too many organizations and individuals have come forward for me to name. I would say a good number in the print media have as well. Regrettably, that has not been the case yet with the national news broadcasters, but I am hoping that they too will soon see their responsibility to keep the bill in front of Canadians' consciousness.

We held eight town halls over the course of the last two weeks. They were full to the bursting point. I want to come back to *The Globe and Mail* as one of the examples of the print media. It did an unprecedented thing by writing five editorials in a row condemning the bill, taking it apart bit by bit, to the point that the first one said:

The...government's continued focus on the threat of voter fraud in federal elections is approaching absurdity. Everyone with any expertise who has examined the question in detail has arrived at the same conclusion: There is no threat. And yet the government insists that controversial provisions in its proposed Fair Elections Act are needed to eliminate this non-existent terror—even at the risk of disenfranchising thousands of legitimate voters. It makes no sense.

In another editorial, it says simply:

The Fair Elections Act needs a rewrite and a rethink. It isn't good for Canadian democracy.

Today, we see no doubt that *The Globe and Mail* is aware that the entire day in the House is being devoted to our opposition day motion. In an editorial entitled, "For the Good of the Country: Kill this bill", the *Globe* states:

For the government, it is an opportunity to admit error and change course.... This bill deserves to die. The Fair Elections Act must be stopped. Killing it should be Parliament's first order of business.

With that, many of my colleagues will be laying bare the problems with the government's case, the minister's case, which stands on no evidential foundation for getting rid of vouching, getting rid of the use of voter information cards, and gutting public education and outreach.

My task is simply to say that I am speaking to my Conservative colleagues across the aisle. You frankly have been spun by cabinet and the minister. You have a duty to look at this in more detail because, if you do not, you will regret it. You must exert your independence and vote with us today on getting rid of these three elements. If you do not do the right thing, you will be remembered for not standing up for democracy when called for. And if you do not back down, people will remember.

Business of Supply

I would end by saying and reminding you that contrary to what the minister has said in his own op-ed today in *The Globe and Mail*, accusing us and others of hysteria, the fact is that more and more Canadians are engaged, and more and more Canadians are enraged. You should pay attention. If you do not, 2015 will bring a surprise.

• (1210)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): I would remind hon. members to direct their commentary through the Chair.

Questions and comments.

The hon. member for Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member's speech was not really focused on the specific wording of the motion but laid out three items that he would like to see removed from the bill, and then pointed to a series of groups that he said would be disadvantaged if these changes were allowed to remain in the bill, suggesting instead that they be removed.

The three groups, as I recall, were new voters, including both immigrants and students, and seniors in residences, and aboriginal voters.

I want to turn to the second group of voters. When looking at the things he does not like about the bill, the voter information card and the vouching system, I cannot see how these things affect seniors voting in residences.

In the last election, there was a case that went before the Supreme Court, *Opitz v. Wrzesnewskyj*, in which the issue arose of the people who are not identified under the current system, who do not have voter cards, and who also do not have anyone living in the same poll because they are serviced by a mobile poll.

I do not think there is anything in the bill that would address this problem. I do not think there is anything in the current act that addresses the problem. I also do not think that the Chief Electoral Officer has pointed to any way of dealing with this very real problem.

Given the very legitimate problem that seniors living in residences are in fact hard to identify under the current system, I would like to hear what suggestions he has for taking advantage of this legislation to ensure that they would be able to exercise their franchise.

• (1215)

Mr. Craig Scott: Mr. Speaker, I think it is important to point out with respect to seniors in residences that the fundamental point that the Chief Electoral Officer wants known is that in 2011 a large experiment was conducted with respect to aboriginal people on reserves, seniors in residences, people in long-term convalescent homes, and students on university and college campuses, to see whether the voter information card would both facilitate the voter process on election day and serve to enfranchise people having a very hard time showing address as one of two pieces of ID.

The experiment was a success, so much so that in response to the Neufeld report of last year, the Chief Electoral Officer made it known that he was going to authorize that voter information cards be used by every Canadian across the country.

With respect to seniors in residences, the feedback from the managers and people living in residences was that it facilitated things, so much so that everybody was delighted by how well it worked.

The fact is that many seniors residences do not provide, or refuse to provide, or are slow to provide the kind of attestation of residence that could also be a proof of address, and so, the voter information card substituted for that and made voting that much easier for seniors in residences.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I want to thank the member for Toronto—Danforth for raising this. I want to thank the official opposition for putting this in one of its supply day motions. This is critical. It is unprecedented, as the hon. member noted, for one of the major national newspapers in this country, *The Globe and Mail*, to run five sequential editorials urging that the bill not pass. This is not some sort of partisan hysteria, as the minister would have us believe. This response to the so-called fair elections act is the response that should come from every single member of this place in response to a bill that is so deliberately intended to suppress a vote. It is not acceptable in the Canadian democracy.

I ask my hon. colleague, should the amendments not proceed successfully today, should we not be able to amend the bill, is it not time for opposition parties to band together and perhaps seek a ruling from the Supreme Court before the bill passes that this violates section 3 of the charter?

Mr. Craig Scott: Mr. Speaker, let me say that I am pretty confident that if the bill passes intact or anywhere close to intact, there will be no small lineup of civically minded individuals and organizations that would challenge it.

The vouching provisions will certainly be challenged as the final safeguard for protecting the right to vote, but the entire intricate interconnection of elements in the bill—which all come down to depriving and excluding people from their right to vote, in the result but increasingly by intention because the government knows this will be the result—will also be challengeable.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am very pleased to speak to this motion today.

This motion deals with what is referred to as the new electoral reform bill, which would change many things in our electoral system. Our motion addresses three points in particular: vouching, voter education programming by Elections Canada, and the use of voter cards.

In our opinion, by getting rid of these three extremely important measures the government is harming certain specific groups in particular and I will try to explain why in my speech. Those groups are youth, new Canadians, aboriginal Canadians and seniors living in residences.

Business of Supply

Let us begin with vouching. Vouching enables young people who attend school away from home or who are living somewhere where it is very difficult to prove residence to vote by showing identification in the presence of a colleague, a roommate or someone who knows them well and can confirm their identity so that they can vote.

The major advantage to vouching is that the information of both the voter and the voucher is taken down. When people talk about possible or hypothetical fraud in the vouching system, let us not forget that we have all the information from both people who are voting.

Does anyone really believe that someone who is going to cheat the electoral system would provide all their personal information, namely their ID card with a photo, their telephone number and their address? That is absolutely ridiculous. The idea behind vouching is to allow anyone who has difficulty meeting the requirements to exercise their right to vote.

Personally, I was in that situation for quite a while. I am from Montreal and I moved to Rimouski to go to school. I lived there for a number of years without any official proof of address. I lived in residence where electricity was paid for, so I did not have an electricity bill. I had nothing to prove that I lived at that address in Rimouski.

If I could not go to the polling station on election day to vote because I did not have such evidence or documents, I could not exercise my right to vote. That is the reality of the changes to the elections act being proposed today.

My second point has to do with voting using the voter information card, which also specifically affects these groups. As my colleague from Toronto—Danforth just mentioned in response to a question from the government, the 2011 target groups who could use voter information cards to vote were youth, aboriginal people and seniors in residences.

All those in positions of authority who have experience with the electoral system, including the Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Neufeld and everyone who was involved in the process, have said that this excellent measure helped people to be able to vote. They also recommended that everyone be allowed to use voter information cards.

What did the government decide to do instead? It decided that even the target groups would no longer be allowed to use these cards. These people will be left to their own devices and will have to find a way to vote. The government is telling young people who want to get involved and who want to vote but who face many obstacles to fend for themselves, to make arrangements and to find a way to navigate the new system and vote. However, problems already exist. For example, voter turnout among youth is abysmal.

Mr. Mayrand said something in committee that really stuck with me because I think it clearly identifies the problem. He said:

It is essential to understand that the main challenge for our electoral democracy is not voter fraud, but voter participation.

• (1220)

With regard to the young people who will have difficulty, I would like to quote the motion that I moved in May 2013 before the

Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs because it is extremely important. It reads:

That the Committee:

(a) Recognize that reports of the Chief Electoral Officer submitted to Parliament from 2010 onward demonstrate that, if Parliament does not modernize our electoral system in order to engage young Canadians, lower and lower percentages of eligible voters will turn out to vote in future federal elections; and

(b) Conduct a comprehensive study before December 2013 on potential mechanisms to enhance youth electoral engagement in Canada, with the view to implement such changes before the next federal election, including: modernizing the online voter registration system; ensuring there are polling stations on university and college campuses across the country; recruiting and training more youth to act as elections officers; raising awareness about how and where to vote, especially among mobile college and university students; considering an electronic voting system; considering automatic registration; and, removing barriers to pre-registering young people at age 16 as prospective voters, in advance of eligibility to vote at age 18.

We thought of such measures because we believed that this issue had to be studied in order to determine how to increase the youth voter turnout rate. Instead of considering these ways to improve youth participation, not only is the government eliminating vouching and voter cards as means of identification, but it is also eliminating all of Elections Canada's voter education programs. Elections Canada will no longer be able to talk to anyone, except to tell voters where, when and how to vote. That is what our dear minister is repeating ad nauseam.

The problem is that encouraging young people to vote is not just about telling them how and where to vote. There are many different things that could be done today to improve the voter turnout of young people. Elections Canada is in the best position to know what to do. It has all the data and the information and the will to improve voter participation. However, it will not have the right to say anything to anyone, other than what it is allowed to say. That really is a problem. I would like to quote the Chief Electoral Officer, who appeared before the committee last week:

I am very preoccupied in this regard with the limitations Bill C-23 imposes on the ability of my office to consult Canadians and disseminate information on electoral democracy, as well as to publish research. I am unaware of any democracy in which such limitations are imposed on the electoral agency and I strongly feel that an amendment in this regard is essential.

The Chief Electoral Officer, Mr. Mayrand, was very clear and said that he was not aware of any democracy that has muzzled its electoral organization like this. This gag order is one of the most harmful things in this bill. Our electoral organization should be independent and able to talk to Canadians about the topics it considers important. If it is not allowed to talk to Canadians, this means it will also not be able to talk about potential cases of fraud, since this will not be one of the very limited number of topics the minister will allow the Chief Electoral Officer to talk about.

Business of Supply

We believe that these three things have a negative impact on the participation of groups that are already at a disadvantage in the voting process. Meaningful action could be taken. For example, the Chief Electoral Officer made recommendations to address the potential problems with the voter identification cards and the vouching system. He made some excellent suggestions. For example, he suggested that the government give him the power to hire people earlier and that they be better training. If election staff are better trained and better equipped, there will be far fewer errors of this type that can lead to bigger problems.

•(1225)

The Chief Electoral Officer made a number of suggestions that were not reflected in this bill. That is unacceptable.

[*English*]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments by the member, and I want to pick up on some of her comments in regard to the manner in which the legislation is before us today.

It is completely unacceptable that the government has chosen to put Bill C-23 before us in the fashion that it has. There was no legitimate consultation done with Elections Canada. There was no consultation done with opposition parties. There was no consultation done with other stakeholders, and this is one of our fundamental cornerstones of democracy in Canada.

It is fundamentally flawed legislation, and I am wondering if the member would go so far as to agree with what the *Globe* has said in its editorials, that the bill needs to be stopped in its tracks.

•(1230)

[*Translation*]

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: Mr. Speaker, I thank my colleague from Winnipeg North for his comments.

I agree with him and with today's editorial in *The Globe and Mail*. The government really missed an opportunity with this bill. I have been a member of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs since May 2011. We have been looking at the changes needed to the Canada Elections Act for a very long time. We have been waiting for many changes for a long time, and they are needed now.

The problem is that, as usual with the Conservatives, the bill contains all kinds of measures that do not make sense and that will undermine our democracy. We cannot even accept the few measures that are truly needed and that should be passed immediately, because there are too many measures that are very bad for Canadians.

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank my hon. colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent for her speech.

I would like to talk about one of the many interviews she did with the media about this bill and her work to oppose it. A week ago Sunday, she did an interview with Myriam Ségal of FM93. What is interesting is that on Wednesday, just a few days ago, FM93's morning show with Sylvain Bouchard revisited the subject. That is one of the most popular shows in the Quebec City area.

The host, Mr. Bouchard, and Ms. Ségal were surprised by various provisions of the bill and wondered about its real purpose. Consider,

for example, the fact that the Chief Electoral Officer would be prohibited from publicizing certain things and the fact that expenses do not have to be reported if the activity is considered a fundraising activity, not to mention the mandatory transmittal of a full list of voters who did not vote. This got quite a reaction on the airwaves.

I imagine my colleague received similar reactions in other media forms and from the general public. I would like to hear more about how people have been reacting to this government bill.

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse: Mr. Speaker, I sincerely thank my hon. colleague from Beauport—Limoilou for his kind words.

During the interviews I have done with the media, journalists have been very interested in what is happening here. People understand that this bill will affect all Canadians, without exception. All Canadian citizens have the right to vote and will be affected by these changes.

There are many problems with this bill that I did not have time to talk about. For instance, we were talking about funding, a subject that our colleagues in Quebec City often discuss. How can the Conservatives justify the fact that all expenses related to fundraising are excluded from election expenses, when the Chief Electoral Officer himself said that this measure is completely unenforceable, because there would be no way to properly verify what is eligible and what is ineligible? He said that, basically, this leaves the door open to fraud, and it would be impossible for him to do his job, which is to enforce the Canada Elections Act.

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the opposition has reacted with predictable hyperbole to the fair elections bill, yet the bill is full of the common-sense measures that are required for the improvement of our democratic system.

To start with, let us deal with the issue of vouching. The opposition has made a controversy over that question, so let us zero in on the issue at stake. Some people have argued that we should not need photo ID to vote. They are right; we should not, and we do not. With the fair elections bill, people will still be able to vote without photo ID in Canada.

In fact, with the passage of the fair elections bill, people will not even need government ID to cast a ballot in this country. People will have the ability to use 39 different forms of identification when they cast their ballot under the fair elections bill, just as is the case right now. So what is the change? A voter will be required to provide some proof of identity and residence; it will no longer suffice for people to simply have a voucher stand in place and assert who they are and where they live.

Business of Supply

The risks of vouching are obvious. It is obviously risky to allow someone to vote without having any documented ID of who they are or where they live. They could conceivably vote more than once or in a constituency in which they do not reside.

What is worse than these mere risks is the fact that the safeguards that are meant to mitigate the risks were violated 50,735 times, or 42% of the time, in the last election, according to Elections Canada's own compliance report.

Supporters of vouching have mistakenly believed that they had experienced an "aha" moment recently, when the author of that report, Harry Neufeld, restated his long-standing support for vouching. That was nothing new, of course, nor had anyone ever suggested anything to the contrary. His support for vouching has long been documented. In fact, it was in his report that has been on the public record for a very long time. Anybody could have looked it up. It was not news that he restated that position.

The fact that a long-standing supporter of vouching was the one who actually reported the violations of the rules and its use should be all the more troubling to all of us. Still, some claim that the enormous number of irregularities were simply record-keeping hiccups.

The Neufeld report, regardless of what the author might now claim, said exactly the opposite. Let me quote from page 5:

Errors that involve a failure to properly administer these procedures are serious. The courts refer to such serious errors as "irregularities" which can result in votes being declared invalid.

If members do not like that, they should try page 14:

Too frequently, the errors are so serious that the courts would judge them to be "irregularities" that violate the legal provisions that establish an elector's entitlement to vote.

Further, Neufeld noted that the sorts of vouching errors that occurred in the riding of Etobicoke Centre "could contribute to a court overturning an election". That last clause was a quote from page 10.

Rules exist for a reason. They are the "legal safeguards, in place to ensure each elector is actually eligible to vote..". That is on page 6. Their systematic violation is serious enough for our court to overturn an election result or invalidate a vote, according to the report.

What are these rules, and why does it matter that they were violated? The rule that was most often violated in the last election was the requirement that the local Elections Canada personnel keep records of who vouched and who was vouched for.

●(1235)

By the way, this can be found on page 64 of the final report.

In 45,000 cases there is no such record, so we do not know who was vouched for and we do not know who did the vouching. If we do not know who vouched, then those individuals could violate the rule that they are not supposed to vouch more than once. That is a rule because, if someone systematically vouches for a large number of voters, then that individual can allow voters to cast more than one ballot or cast ballots in constituencies in which they do not reside. That is why the rule exists. The fact that it was violated 45,000-plus times should be a concern to all of us.

We are proposing a very reasonable solution. Individuals could bring basically any document showing who they are and where they live. That document does not have to come from the Government of Canada, the Government of Ontario or any provincial government, or a municipal government. It could come from a utility company. It could come in the form of a student card or an attestation. There are 39 different options. If the opposition wants to focus on a particular category of elector, I am happy to share a form of identification within the existing 39 acceptable examples that would provide those voters with an opportunity to identify who they are and where they live.

Voter turnout is the next issue of debate that the opposition has raised. There are two things that drive people to vote. One is motivation and the other is information. Motivation is what parties and candidates offer to inspire people to vote, giving them something to vote for. Information—the where, when, and how—is the responsibility of Elections Canada.

Election Canada's own data suggests it has done a poor job of providing that information. After the last election, young non-voters reported that not knowing where, when, or how to vote affected their decision not to cast a ballot; 25% did not know where to vote; 26% did not know when; and 19% did not know how to vote. That was one of the factors that led them to make the decision not to cast their ballot.

In the last election, half of our youth in this country did not know that they could vote before election day. Three-quarters of aboriginal youth did not know. If people are busy on election day and are not aware that they can vote early, they miss their chance. That is what led, I think, Elections Canada to write the following in one of its post-election reports, "The most important access barrier was lack of knowledge about the electoral process, including not knowing about different ways to vote...". The fair elections act would require Elections Canada to communicate this basic information, while the parties do the job of voter motivation.

Finally, the fair elections act would make the law enforcement watchdog, Commissioner Yves Côté, independent from the Chief Electoral Officer. Predictably, the latter does not like that idea. That being said, I think it is completely essential.

First, there are almost three dozen offences in the Canada Elections Act that deal with the conduct of the Chief Electoral Officer's staff. How can the commissioner investigate the CEO's staff when he is one of the CEO's staff himself?

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Second, the fair elections act would move the commissioner into the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions. The director has been responsible for laying charges under the Canada Elections Act for the last seven years, and during that time his independence has never been questioned and that is because it is unquestionable. The director is appointed on the recommendation of a committee of non-partisan public servants, a representative of each political party, and a representative of the law societies of the country. The appointment is then validated by an all-party committee of the House of Commons. After being put in that position, the director cannot be removed except through a vote by the House of Commons. In fact, that removal process is similar to what is required for officers of Parliament, including the CEO of Elections Canada and the Auditor General of Canada. No one would argue that those positions lack independence.

Prior to this debate no one has ever argued—and to my knowledge no one in the House of Commons has ever argued—that the Director of Public Prosecutions is not independent. I have never heard Elections Canada argue that the Director of Public Prosecutions is not independent. He has already exercised that independence as the chief prosecutor responsible for the Canada Elections Act for the last seven years. No charges can be laid under that act without his express sign-off and without the prosecution his office carries out subsequently in the courts.

● (1240)

Section 2 of the Director of Public Prosecutions Act specifically excludes the Attorney General, who is an elected politician, from any involvement in prosecutions related to the Canada Elections Act. I have never heard a single example where anyone has even alleged that this provision of the Director of Public Prosecutions Act has been violated. It has been scrupulously and faithfully followed by the DPP, the Attorneys General, and everyone else involved. Not only has there been no finding of wrongdoing in this respect, but I am not aware of even an allegation.

Beyond the independence of the DPP from the government, there is the ongoing independence of the commissioner from the DPP. Allow me to quote directly from clause 108 of the fair elections act. It says:

The Commissioner is to conduct the investigation independently of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

In other words, the prosecutor cannot direct the investigation. That job is exclusively in the hands of the commissioner under the fair elections act. Furthermore, for the first time, the commissioner would have a fixed term, he could not be fired without cause, and he would have control of staffing and investigations. That is real independence.

Canadians instinctively understand that these principles are rooted in both common sense and fairness. That is why they have not joined in the hysteria of the opposition.

The next point of peculiarity in the opposition's critique is related to fundraising. The opposition has come out against the provision in the act that would allow parties to exempt fundraising calls, emails, and letters from campaign expenses. The provision is based on a well-established principle that there is a distinction between raising funds for a campaign and spending those same funds for a campaign.

It is the same reason why people do not put mileage on their car while they are standing and putting gas in it. The mileage only starts to add up when the wheels start turning. The fuel in the car, by itself, does not cause the mileage to grow.

Is this a principle that was invented out of thin air? Actually, it was right in the NDP rule book for its leadership race. Let us look at rule seven, regarding expenses not subject to the party's expense ceiling: 7 d) says, "Any expenses for fundraising...". Those expenses are explicitly excluded.

In fact, in the NDP rule book, the fundraising exemption is far more vast than what is proposed in the fair elections act. Our bill, by contrast, has clear definitions of what constitutes a fundraising expense. It must be directed at a previous donor of the last five years and it must have the purpose of raising funds, rather than some other purpose.

When the NDP excluded fundraising expenses from its leadership race, it had no such limitations on the exclusion. It was simply the case that anything claimed to be fundraising did not count as part of the party's spending limit. Therefore, for the NDP to now claim that it is opposed to the distinction between fundraising expenses and campaign expenses is a little rich, to put it generously.

We look forward to having continued debate on this bill. I expect there will be a very thorough vetting at the committee, where dozens of witnesses will come and share their points of view. I am prepared, should I be asked to return to the committee, to answer any further questions that the members may have. Although I have not been invited, I put out that offer to the committee.

That being said, this Elections Act reform is fair. It has common sense, and it would ensure that everyday Canadians stay in charge of democracy. It would put special interests on the sidelines. It would put rulebreakers out of business. It would close loopholes to big money. It would bring in new penalties for political imposters who use rogue calls to deceive voters.

● (1245)

It would prevent political candidates from using unpaid debts as a way of getting around donation limits, as the Liberals were successful in doing in their leadership race.

These are changes to our electoral system that have been long required. The fair elections act would provide them. That is why I am proud to move the bill and to continue to support it as it travels through the parliamentary process.

● (1250)

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the minister for going through what we have already read today in *The Globe and Mail*.

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Since the CEO's report on the 2008 election, the usefulness of voter information cards as a counterbalance to some of the obstacles in presenting ID has been clear. That was six years ago. Indeed, before that report, Elections Canada engaged in a survey of electors from by-elections before the 2008 election, and 4.5% reported not being able to vote because they could not put together the right set of ID after the ID rules had changed.

Elections Canada's reports are resplendent with concerns about the problems of showing ID. Therefore, being able to use voter information cards was raised in 2011. The Chief Electoral Officer, along with the former chief electoral officer of B.C., Harry Neufeld, has suggested expanding their use. The report that the minister started using an awful lot in support of his arguments does come down on the following side: Harry Neufeld's report says vouching should stay, the use of voter information cards should be expanded, and parties should get out of the business of recruiting election day workers so that much better training can result.

After the minister has been talking about how he has never heard anyone criticizing or saying this or that, my question is: Where did the minister get the idea to get rid of voter information cards as a form of ID? Who has been recommending this?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the voter information cards in the last election had a one in six error rate. One out of every six voter information cards sent out contained an error. The problem with errors in those cards is that they allow people to vote in places where they do not live, or potentially vote more than once. We know that there are cases where people have used voter information cards to vote multiple times. If a Quebec comedy show is able to do it, with very little necessary political sophistication, but to do it as a joke, then basically anyone who got more than one card could do it. In the case I just mentioned, two Montrealers each got two cards and each voted twice. It was so easy that they were able to make a television segment about it.

The reality is that the one in six error rate is too high. Elections Canada claims to have reduced it to one in twelve, which is still too high. Either way, it is not a secure way to identify who people are or where they live. That is the basis for our decision to remove it as a form of ID, but to allow people to continue to use 39 other forms of identification to show where they live and who they are.

**Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor, Lib.):** Mr. Speaker, we have approached the subject of the system of vouching time and time again. From my own point of view, the minister is excessive in trying to correct what he perceives as massive fraud going on, when in fact this is a system that franchises people to vote. By throwing it out completely, he has overblown the issue.

For example, what he just said was that there were 45,000 irregularities. That means that when they were vouched they were not reported. By saying that, he is insinuating that all 45,000 incidents were examples of fraud. They are not. There is that possibility in some of them, but that does not mean all of them have to be tarred with the same brush. This is what the members are doing. They are extrapolating from something that is an inefficiency in the vouching system and using it as a means to eliminate vouching altogether.

At some point during his consultations, did the minister reconsider or fight the internal people he spoke to about not eliminating vouching but making it more efficient or fixing the system, not simply throwing it out?

• (1255)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, the member is correct in saying that in 45,000 cases the voter or the voucher was not recorded into the system. No one has ever suggested that is 45,000 instances of fraud, but it is 45,000 violations of the rules that are supposed to protect the system against fraud. When we do not know who was vouched for or who did the vouching, we cannot ensure that people do not vouch more than once. In fact, the CEO came to the committee and said he was not able to find a single example. Of course he was not able to find a single example of fraud; he did not know who the people were who actually did the vouching in 45,000 cases. How could he possibly find out if there were any fraudulent cases? I am not sure if he actually pursued any of them, but even if he did, he would not have any way to do so.

What I am suggesting here is that we have 39 forms of ID; not just drivers' licence and health card but things like a hospital bracelet, a library card, a student ID card, an Indian status card. There are 39 different examples of ID that people can use. Photo ID is not required in Canada nor is government-issued ID. We have a very generous system allowing 39 different forms of ID, and we will ensure that people know what they are.

**Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington,
CPC):** Mr. Speaker, in referring to these examples, Harry Neufeld, who wrote the Neufeld report, described them as "irregularities". He then clarified on page five or six of his report that an irregularity means a problem that is severe enough that it could result in the overturning of an election.

We see this in the case of the *Opitz v. Wrzesnewskyj* case that went to the Supreme Court of Canada, in which the court came very close to disallowing it and starting the election over again, not because they in the court thought that anybody had voted fraudulently but because it was impossible to tell whether the votes had been cast legitimately. There was a dispute. The majority, which I think did the right thing, said that we could be secure enough about the identities of the particular individuals in question, who were in a closed-entry residential seniors residence.

However, we can see the problem that arises here. Fraud is not the only thing that can cause an election to be controverted. The inability to establish whether people voted legitimately or whether there were accidental irregularities is also a problem.

Would the minister comment on this concern?

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Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, yes, and the fact that Mr. Neufeld is a supporter of vouching should give us all the more concern because these numbers come from a supporter of vouching. These are not numbers we pulled out of a source that was trying to overturn the system. This is someone who went in supporting it, and found that there were over 50,000 irregularities.

In the report, those irregularities are defined as being serious enough to either invalidate a vote or have a court overturn an election result. Each irregularity violates the safeguards that determine whether someone is actually eligible to vote. That is serious, and when in 42% of cases where vouching is used the irregularities were so serious that those safeguards were violated, we have reason to act; and that is what we do in our bill.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. minister. I appreciate the fact that I was consulted in advance of Bill C-23.

In my written submission to the minister, I pointed out that Canada had a crisis of voter turnout and that claims that we had an issue of voter fraud were erroneous and there was no evidence for it. I urged him to further expedite voting by reducing the number of pieces of ID required in various circumstances in changes to the Elections Act that his administration brought forward a number of years ago. He did not give me a hint of what he had planned or I would have been a bit more forceful in my recommendations that the Conservatives not make voting harder for Canadians.

Given that Mr. Neufeld's report and Mr. Neufeld himself have made it very clear that they found no incidents of fraud, and I put it to the minister that the authorities could certainly have investigated it had they suspected it as there is more than enough information there to investigate if there was a suspicion of fraud, there is no suspicion of fraud. I say again that the electoral crisis in Canada is not that Canadians are voting more than once; it is that they are voting less than once, and we must change this bill.

Will the minister consider amendments?

● (1300)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre: Mr. Speaker, I do appreciate the input that the member provided before the bill was introduced. She is one of the most informed people in the country about matters of electoral mechanics, having been a leader in two or three successive elections. Yet, one of her public press releases suggested that Canadians require photo ID to vote when they do not require photo ID to vote. They do not even require government-issued ID to vote.

One of the problems the fair elections act seeks to solve is the bad information that circulates around the mechanics of voting. A lot of Canadians do not know what ID they need because Elections Canada does a bad job of communicating that information. Elections Canada's own data shows that many people do not know what occasions and which days they can vote on in the lead-up to an election.

The fact that one of the most informed people in the country on the subject is not aware that photo ID is not required to vote tells us that the agency needs to do a better job of informing Canadians that there are 39 different acceptable forms of ID to vote. They do not

need photo or government-issued ID. There are plenty of options. We will make sure that Canadians know what they are.

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I stand here among volumes of papers and consultations from the academic world, both national, domestic, and international, as well as editorials, and all of this is piling up against this particular act. *The Globe and Mail* was so bold as to say this morning in its headline, "Kill this bill", period. This was following a five-piece editorial submission by *The Globe and Mail*, which basically takes this bill apart.

In the *National Post*, there is full comment under the headline, "Don't undermine Elections Canada". It was a letter sent in by not just a couple of academics. Sometimes when there is legislation in the House, a couple of academics will write in, saying that they have spent a lifetime studying a subject and write serious papers and dissertations about it. In this case, there were not a couple, not 10, not 20, not even 50, but 160 academics who signed a letter with the headline, "Don't undermine Elections Canada", against this bill.

I repeat for the sake of *Hansard* and everybody watching at home, 160 experts signed this letter saying that this is not the way to go, and what is being purported by the government through the minister, originating from the PMO one can only assume, is that this is a systematic and very clandestine way of supporting voting suppression, at least the beginning stages of it.

I want to quote from *The Globe and Mail* because it had a couple of good things to say this morning about this, which I think is very pertinent to the conversation. It said:

The government has resorted to defending itself with out of context citations from experts,....

I will address that a little later and it was talked about earlier. It went on to state:

...[the] conclusions are the opposite of what the government pretends. Tightening the rules will prevent many eligible Canadians from voting; those affected are mostly not Conservative voters.

Therein lies, at the base of this, something that the Conservatives are attempting to do in a very clandestine way. There are some provisions in this bill that Liberals accept, such as the transmission of results across the country. Obviously, technology dictates that is something we should do, and other provisions, but at the core of this, as the member who moved this motion today pointed out, are five areas that we consider subtle ways, but as time goes on we realize it is not as subtle as they originally attempted, which was put forward by 160 academics.

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I want to quote from the letter that the academics sent in. Remember that these are local academics. International academics have now gotten on board with this as well, saying, "By the way, what Canada is doing is the opposite of what it did in the past". This is what is called a retrograde policy, as Elections Canada was and, in my opinion, still is a model for global democracy.

Many of us members travel internationally and speak to many of our counterparts across the world. I have spent time at the Council of Europe. A while ago, there was a resolution calling on fairer democracies and institutions that uphold fair democracies, but in the report put out by the Council of Europe, the rapporteur also talked about how the intent is to create an independent body that is able to fully investigate situations with potential fraud in the system. I know the minister likes to talk about the independence of this particular office, meaning the commissioner, who is really the sheriff in town, finding out about how election fraud comes about, investigating that with charges to be laid, so on and so forth.

What he has done, though, is made this office independent of Elections Canada and put it into public prosecutions. The independence of this particular office is talked about as being the way to go, but here is the problem. If the tools by which that person can do his or her job are not supplied, then the job cannot be done, whether it is independent or not.

• (1305)

The minister wants to make sure the referee is independent. He wants to make sure that the referee on the ice is wearing the right uniform. The problem is that they did not give him a whistle, so he has to run around shouting to people that they should not do that, which does not make it very effective, does it? The play does not stop unless the whistle is blown, so the referee in this case is ineffective in doing the job on the ice, to carry the analogy further.

I will stop right there with that one, because I do believe that under public prosecutions, the intent may have been there from the beginning, but the follow-up of providing the tools is not there.

The robocalls incident is a perfect illustration of why these tools are needed, and that is why it surfaced through the current CEO of Elections Canada. It was the need to get the testimony to get to the bottom of this issue and find out who was responsible. We all admit in this House that something nefarious was happening, but so far just one person has been charged when we know that more people were involved.

The courts have already cast an opinion saying that the database system used by the Conservatives was at the core of this nefarious activity, but a lot of witnesses were not coming forward with testimony. If the commissioner had the ability to apply to a judge to compel a person to provide the testimony, provided that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms is held up, then they would do that.

The Conservatives say that not even police have that authority. That is their argument. However, I would argue that actually the police do have tools similar to what we are asking for.

I use the example of wiretapping. Police can apply to a judge to get permission for wiretapping nefarious activities that have the potential of breaking the law, but they apply to a judge to do that. Lo and behold, a starker contrast would be the fact that there are

provinces in this country that already have this ability. Their elections officers have the ability to do it. They do it because it is effective.

Finally, there is federal legislation that says this ability exists within the federal system. It is under the Competition Act. The commissioner there has the ability to apply to a judge to compel testimony in relation to contravening the Competition Act.

The model exists in other jurisdictions. The examples the Conservatives tried to use to refute why they should not have that power are simply not true. Both the CEO and the current commissioner said that the ability to compel testimony is key to finding out who has committed fraud on a massive level, such as in the robocalls situation. In that example, nefarious activity was happening, yet we could not get to the bottom of it for that reason.

I will go back to the letter submitted by the academics. I want to quote from it, because some of the quotes are worth hearing within the context of this debate.

They say:

We see no justification for introducing legislation of such pivotal importance to our democracy without significant consultation with Elections Canada, opposition parties, and the public at large.

Neither of these things was happening.

There was a meeting. I had a meeting with Elections Canada back around late summer. However, in that meeting, specific mention of new legislation was not there. When I spoke to the CEO of Elections Canada as critic for democratic reform, we did briefly talk about the potential of new legislation, so we were talking about it, but I wonder why the minister felt it was not necessary to have that discussion.

I want to quote from this letter again, this time on voter identification, because this is a very important issue.

Because of the ID requirements, a lot of people in my riding in central Newfoundland were not able to vote. They were able to vote later because of the vouching, but certainly it was because they lacked particular ID that mostly those in seniors' residences were not able to do that. There are lots of ID documents that do not have an address associated with them, and since they were living in residences, they did not have utility bills. Those bills would be paid by the residence itself.

• (1310)

Here is what the academics said in their letter:

The use of voter cards is especially important for Canadians who lack ID that proves their current address, such as students, senior citizens in long-term care facilities, First Nations citizens, and those who have recently moved. Although not perfect, VICs are more likely to provide an accurate address than most other forms of ID, including drivers' licenses. We believe that the elimination of VICs as a valid form of ID in federal elections would reduce the likelihood of voting by some citizens.

There is no doubt in their minds that this would happen.

Earlier today, the minister talked about 45,000 incidents that took place with Elections Canada officials when vouching was not recorded. However, as I said in my question, one cannot necessarily draw the conclusion that there were 45,000 incidents of fraud.

Why do we not get to the root cause of this situation? Was there a clerical error that officials were not able to fix at the time? Was it something that Elections Canada officials were not aware they had to do at the time, but the vouching was purely legitimate? These questions were not explored.

We say that the voter identification card, along with the system of vouching itself, does need improving. That is why we are here: to debate amendments that would improve the system. However, we should not throw something out simply because it contains inefficiencies. We should try to fix that system.

Remember, we can say that 45,000 incidents took place, or just over 50,000 incidents of potential fraud, but as has been pointed by the academics and by most people who are against the bill, we could be disenfranchising over 120,000 voters by bringing in this legislation. I know for a fact, because I have seen it myself—and I say that legitimately—that people at the poll were disenfranchised because they did not have ID containing their address.

I assume that at some point before the bill was introduced, the conversation was to fix the system and create efficiencies, but eventually the Conservatives got around to just throwing it out, period, on scant evidence that was just willy-nilly. The Conservatives seem to be saying that because of the so many thousands of people involved in a particular riding, the potential is there for fraud, but they did not investigate further to find out exactly what happened.

Vouching is a system that is used by many democracies throughout the world and, as is pointed out in this letter, by students, first nation citizens, seniors in residence, and people who have just moved.

The academics have also said this:

The Bill also fails to provide the Commissioner with the powers necessary to properly investigate electoral infractions. For example, the Commissioner will not have the power to compel witness testimony, a major stumbling block during the robocalls investigation.

We talked about that earlier.

They talked about campaign finance:

Bill C-23 would make several changes to campaign finance and expense reporting after elections. Taken separately, these changes may seem minor, but together they increase the influence of money in Canadian politics.

Earlier the minister said that Bill C-23 would fix efficiencies in reporting for leadership candidates. He referred to the Liberals, but in fact, what would this have meant for the current Prime Minister in his leadership battle? Nothing was out there—nothing.

• (1315)

I fear that a lot of this is geared toward a particular party or a particular cause and disenfranchises others. It is as though the Conservatives are not gaining something for Elections Canada or taking the opportunity to strengthen Elections Canada in what it does, but are trying to gain an advantage as political players. That is what is most disturbing about this situation.

All of this leads to the same conclusion reached by 160 international academics, *The Globe and Mail* that I cited earlier, the *Toronto Star*, major newspapers, and comment in the *National*

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Post. The evidence is climbing against this legislation. They are people who are experts in the field who would attack anybody who attacked democracy. They would do it to us, to the NDP, or to the Green Party or the Conservatives. They say that there are egregious attempts within this legislation to isolate voters, when improving the system was there for Conservatives to take advantage of and they chose not to do it.

The motion being put forward today brings up some very important policy about vouchers and voter identification as key stumbling blocks to many people who should be able to vote, but essentially I want to talk as well about how consultation was not there either. That is an incredibly disturbing part of this situation. In terms of putting information out to the average voter to entice a person to vote, the Conservatives talk about how it is up to parties to put out the message to get people to vote for them. It is ironic that a party that spends of millions in negative advertising is saying it is up to parties to convince people to not vote for something, to go to the polls constantly angry, but that is a debate for another day.

Elections Canada has an incredible opportunity to inspire people who have not voted before to go out and vote. There are people in their thirties or forties who have never voted. Motivating people to vote is a key part of Elections Canada, and Elections Canada's ability to inspire people to vote is one of the main reasons the international community cites it as a great international example of democracy.

I have nothing against the idea of putting out more information to tell people where and when to vote, but there has to be another way to inspire them to vote and to give the resources to do it and to communicate with people in an open fashion. If Elections Canada is truly independent, which the minister is now saying it is, he would have no worries about it doing these things, but apparently that is not the case.

Going forward, I hope that we are able to propose, accept, and converse about proper amendments that would fix many of these things that we oppose in the legislation.

• (1320)

Mr. Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to congratulate my hon. friend on a very well-reasoned speech.

I listened to the debate this morning, and some numbers were thrown around. One of them concerns the important issue of vouching. The estimate is that in the last election about 120,000 Canadians took advantage of the vouching provision. I have heard the hon. minister say that there have been 45,000 cases of administrative irregularity, but the flip side is that there were 75,000 cases in which the vouching system was used absolutely properly. Canadians gave proper ID, the paperwork was done properly, and they vouched for a single Canadian. I find it instructive that not a single one of those 75,000 cases has resulted in an incident of voter fraud. While we have 75,000 cases of proper procedure being followed, there is not a single example across the country of someone voting when we did not have the information to verify.

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In the time when Canadian federal elections are seeing turnouts of about 60%, could the member explain what merit he might see in putting any restrictions on the ability of Elections Canada to restrict voting programs, whether to students or to any other group that may have difficulty voting?

I would conclude by pointing out that when all of the opposition parties are opposed to a bill, all of the major media in the country are opposed to a bill, international experts are opposed to a bill, and the Chief Electoral Officer is opposed to a bill, does my hon. colleague think it might be instructive to the government that maybe it has struck the wrong chord with this piece of legislation?

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, I come from a predominantly fishing riding. There is a lot of fishing that takes place. They can tell you that when they go out fishing in a strong headwind, they are in for some trouble and maybe should turn around. That is exactly what we have in this particular case. I think the government should reverse course, or certainly hold steady for the time being, so that we can have a good debate.

My honourable colleague brings up the function of Elections Canada that would be highly curtailed here, which is to promote the idea of people voting and being inspired to vote. That is unfortunate, because I think it is a necessary thing to do. It is ironic. The government has ads on about the economic action plan to try to inspire people to get involved in government programs and the like. Yet anyone who is so-called independent does not have the ability to do so.

To me, it seems like an extension of a function, paid for by government, that is truly independent, yet they are not independent per se. Its activities have been highly curtailed.

The evidence the member speaks of is no doubt starting to mount, as we have seen today. I can only assume that more of this will come out as the debate unfolds, as we are now in committee. The minister mentioned coming back. I hope he does. He is about to rise to his feet. Maybe he can inform the House about whether he would be willing to consider some of these amendments that were discussed earlier in the debate.

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the member made some interesting comments about the subject of voter identification when people arrive to cast their ballots. He said that people had arrived without the proper ID and were turned away in his constituency. They probably would have benefited from knowing about the 39 different forms of acceptable ID Canadians can use.

Voters do not need photo ID in Canada. They do not need government issued ID in Canada. They can use anything from a student ID card to a hospital or medical clinic card. They can use a hospital bracelet, a fishing, trapping, or hunting licence, or an outdoor or wildlife card or licence. The Canadian National Institute for the Blind issues an ID card, and that is eligible. A firearms possession and acquisition licence is eligible.

Of course, people can use driver's licences and health cards, which contain photos, but they do not have to. A person can also use a utility bill. It could be a television bill or a public utility commission bill for hydro, gas, or water. A bank card statement is allowed. Credit card statements are allowed. An attestation from a responsible

authority on a first nations reserve is allowed. A statement of government benefits, like old age security, is allowed.

Basically anything official that has a person's name and address on it is allowed in Canada. Photo ID is not needed. People do not even need government issued ID to vote in this country.

I wonder if the member might comment on how we can better inform people of these 39 options they have when they cast their ballots.

• (1325)

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, there is nothing wrong with the fact that more ID is now eligible, but herein lies the problem. I think the government is being overly egregious about eliminating the voter identification card. Why do I say that? It is because of the address that is affixed to it.

My health card, MCP, Newfoundland and Labrador, does not have an address on it. Many IDs do not have addresses on them. The minister talked about hospital bracelets. I have yet to see a hospital bracelet that has my address on it. It might have a social insurance number, but it certainly does not have an address. When one is from the riding of Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, they quickly run out of room with some of these community names.

I am sure that the minister, in the deliberations, talked about the lack of addresses. Let us take seniors residences. A lot of these people do not receive, by mail, some of the things he brings up, which is what is going to disenfranchise a lot of voters. My colleague sitting close to me here talked about people who get their bills electronically. Perhaps someone could point out whether a person could use that particular piece of identification. I doubt it.

The core of this issue is the address that is required. This is why so many people will be disenfranchised at the polls.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, as I understand it, with the possible exception of the Prime Minister's Office and possibly a few other Conservatives maybe within the Conservative caucus, there does not seem to be anyone advocating banning the vouching process.

On the other hand, there seems to be a push, whether it was from Elections Canada, many other stakeholders, or political parties, to allow Elections Canada, either directly or indirectly, to compel witnesses in order to deal with many election violations that could potentially take place in the future.

I wonder if the member might want to provide comment on how important it is to actually consult and act upon ideas where there seems to be a consensus, as opposed to acting just on ideas that come from the Prime Minister's Officer or cabinet.

Business of Supply

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, from what we understand, a draft of a bill was presented in caucus, only to be turned down and redrafted. Some people would say that this is only conjecture, but there seem to be several sources who put this out there in the media, and I would like to discuss it. I would love to have a copy of that original draft. I would love to see how it morphed into something else that came to the floor.

Was vouching eliminated? Was the Commissioner of Elections Canada moved to another office? I do not know, but I suspect that something happened. If that is true, which we are led to believe, then the only fundamental amendments or changes to this legislation occurred within the Conservative caucus itself. That is scary in and of itself.

Ms. Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, GP): Mr. Speaker, this is probably the most serious debate in my brief time, the last three years, in the House of Commons. I would venture to say that in the history of Canada, there has rarely been a bill that so dangerously treaded on turning this place from a democracy into an elected dictatorship willing to set in place the mechanisms by which future elections would be stolen. I do not say this lightly.

I ask my hon. colleague what remains to be done. Could more be done on these opposition benches by the opposition parties, working together, to try to get more public awareness across Canada of the threat posed by this legislation?

If *The Globe and Mail* could do what it is doing, can we not, as opposition members, do more?

• (1330)

Mr. Scott Simms: Mr. Speaker, I wish I had more time to expand on this. I will say that if 160 academics can band together, and we know that they always have differing opinions and are not united on all things, as some academics here in this House would attest, and agree that this is particularly egregious, to the point that many things are being done here that take away from our democracy, which serves to be a model around the world, I would hope that, yes, the opposition benches could do more to bring this to the public and band together to stop it. The key, however, is the backbench of the government side and whether those members could bring forward a unity of people against this act and what it could do to our democratic process.

Mr. David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to join in the debate.

Watching this bill has been an interesting journey. Given the way the Conservatives are ramming it through, I suspect that it will get a lot more attention in the historical sense than it will any proper consideration by the House or committee.

It has been interesting to watch the hon. minister rise, from the first day, and hold up the Neufeld report as his shield. When the bill was first introduced in the House, for every question that came up that had to do with vouching, the minister would stand and talk about the Neufeld report. That was the answer to everything. He had the magical answer in the Neufeld report, and that was going to give the legitimacy he was looking for to bring in the changes to vouching, which we know, and the experts know, would deny people the right to vote, more than 100,000 people at least. We also know that this is the whole purpose, because the vast majority of people

who would be vouching, the government has determined, and they may indeed be right, would likely not vote for the Conservatives.

Voter suppression is not exactly something that captures everyone's attention. Anyone who pays attention to what is going on in politics south of Canada knows about voter suppression techniques. When the Supreme Court of the United States ruled that one of its laws was no longer in effect, suddenly a lot of the states that had been holding back on some of their voter suppression techniques had those bills, within 24 hours, back in the house to be passed for the sole purpose of suppressing the vote.

What did Mr. Neufeld have to say about the hon. minister holding up his report as justification for denying the use of voter identification cards? He said, and I quote:

I think any fair-minded person who reads that report would come to the conclusion that [the minister] has not been fair in his assessment of my findings.

I thought it was interesting that he used the word "fair" twice in its proper context, as opposed to this bill, which is anything but fair.

With the minister's main support mechanism shattered and in shreds, the government also has a lot more people than just the official opposition saying that this is a huge problem and that this is less than people expect from the democratic country of Canada. This matters so much in terms of what happens in Canada's democracy that a group of international scholars got together and wrote a joint letter. One would wonder why anyone outside Canada would care much about a Canadian election, other than as a point of interest. It matters because Canada matters. Canada matters in terms of emerging democracies. Canada matters in terms of looking at countries in the world that have the kind of democracy everybody would like to have. We are not the absolute best and the only one, but we are one of a very short list of countries in the world that are looked at as democratic models and ideals. That is why, to perfect our system, we will hopefully get to proportional representation, which is the next big step in bringing better democracy to Canada.

These international scholars are concerned, because if the international standard, which we are part of, starts to get watered down, what would that do for emerging democracies? Those of us who have done a number of election observation missions around the world in emerging democracies know that it is true that they hold up Canada that way. If they see Canada floundering, it leaves them wondering what hope they have.

• (1335)

Mr. Speaker, I forgot to add that I will be sharing my time with the hon. member for Honoré-Mercier.

To continue, what did these international scholars say? They said:

We, the undersigned, international scholars and political scientists, are concerned that Canada's international reputation as one of the world's guardians of democracy and human rights is threatened by passage of the proposed Fair Elections Act.

We believe that this Act would prove [to] be deeply damaging for electoral integrity within Canada, as well as providing an example which, if emulated elsewhere, may potentially harm international standards of electoral rights around the world.

Business of Supply

It does not get much bigger than this when those outside of Canada are looking at this unfair elections act, blowing the whistle, raising the flag, and asking “What is going on”? Once again, the world is left shaking its head, asking “What happened to Canada? Where did Canada go? We have this Harper government thing, but where is Canada?”

Mr. Speaker, I withdraw my wording. It was my mistake. It was a slip. I apologize, sir.

Some hon. members: Oh, oh!

Mr. David Christopherson: Mr. Speaker, how come they want to be heard now? Let us hear them at committee.

Why does it matter that these international scholars are pointing to Canada? It matters because Canada matters, and if our democracy is watered down, that matters. It hurts.

To bring it a little closer to home, but on a national basis, our country's paper of record, *The Globe and Mail*—

Mr. Rick Norlock: “Our country's paper of record”?

Mr. David Christopherson: Mr. Speaker, do you hear the heckle over there? They only used to heckle and slur and look down their noses when one mentioned the *Toronto Star*, but now even *The Globe and Mail* gets their scorn. Why? It is because *The Globe and Mail* understands what is going on. Here is what it is saying: “The [Prime Minister's] government's continued focus on the threat of voter fraud in federal elections is approaching absurdity”. That is what *The Globe and Mail* says. It continues, “Everyone with any expertise who has examined the question in detail has arrived at the same conclusion: There is no threat”.

Regarding the Neufeld report, which is supposedly giving justification for the bill, Mr. Neufeld is saying that the minister is misinterpreting his report, that it is not what he said. Now *The Globe and Mail* is coming out saying the same thing. It is a stand-alone sentence: “There is no threat”. The threat is to the Conservatives' majority government. That is the threat. The government is worried that if enough people actually get out and vote this time, it will lose its majority, since we know that over 60% of Canadians who voted did not vote for the Conservatives in the first place. Therefore, the Conservatives are doing everything they can to try to jig the rules so they can overcome the natural unpopularity of their government as a result of its actions and laws.

The quote from the *Globe* continues: “And yet the government insists that controversial provisions in its proposed Fair Elections Act are needed to eliminate this non-existent terror—even at the risk of disenfranchising thousands of legitimate voters. It makes no sense”.

This has to stop. Virtually everyone is saying that the bill is anything but fair, that it threatens our democracy and the ability of Canadians to express their political will in the next election. Also, people around the world are saying that Canada's watering down of its democracy is going to hurt emerging democracies elsewhere in the world.

This is a very bad bill. This is an unfair law. Kill the bill.

● (1340)

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I had the opportunity to sit through some of the committee meetings regarding Bill C-23, where it became very clear that the government has been negligent on this whole file. The member accurately portrays the sentiment of a good number of Canadians that Bill C-23 should go nowhere.

There are just too many fundamental flaws in the bill. One of the greatest, in my opinion, concerns the ability of the Chief Electoral Officer to compel witness testimony. That is so very important. When the Chief Electoral Officer was before the committee, I had an opportunity to question him directly regarding that. At the end of the day, we would have weakened election laws as a direct result of the bill.

Would the member comment on how badly this legislation needs to be amended. If the Conservative government continues to use its majority to pass the bill, is it not a slap in the face of democracy? Does the bill not, at the very least, need to be substantially amended, if not killed outright?

Mr. David Christopherson: Mr. Speaker, let me say this for the record, because it needs to be said. Notwithstanding the ongoing day-to-day battle my party has with the third party and the representatives of other parties here to be seen as the government-in-waiting, the fact is that on this file, at least in terms of identifying the problems and wanting this bill to be killed, we are united. We have been working closely, and I thank the hon. member for his co-operation, leadership, and assistance. Others, independents whom I cannot name, have also been playing a role.

All of us on this side of the House, except for that little piece where the government can still claim some territory, are united in our position that this bill is bad.

My friend has talked about the inability to compel witnesses to speak. We know that the problems have arisen when allegations against and issues with Conservatives have been investigated and people say they will not talk. Without the power to compel testimony, we will not know what happened. That is exactly what the government wants.

Mr. Speaker, this is not a partisan issue, where the opposition is trying to score points. The opposition is united in concert with experts across the country and across the world, who are saying that this is an unfair elections bill that needs to be changed at the very least, if not killed outright.

● (1345)

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to talk to the members about my personal experience with the last by-elections.

Not everyone in Quebec has to have a photo on their health card. People living in a senior's residence no longer have a driver's licence and there is no photo on their health card. People were sent back to their apartments once or twice so that they would have a piece of ID to show at the polling station.

Business of Supply

The new process creates a lot of confusion. As the Chief Electoral Officer said, we need more time to prepare the people who will be working at the polling stations so that they do not exclude poor people or someone belonging to a minority group. The number of people who vote is dropping right now, not increasing.

I would like to hear the member's opinion on that.

[English]

Mr. David Christopherson: Mr. Speaker, I would respond in part by quoting Mr. Neufeld, who said:

I think Mr. Mayrand is absolutely correct.... And [with] the provision that no one is allowed to use the voter information card that is sent to every individual voter who's registered, I think it will disenfranchise more people in addition.

We have the experts saying that all of the big problems the minister put forward and suggested were evidence of fraud or potential fraud were actually administrative issues.

Mr. Mayrand gave us an example at committee a couple of weeks ago. A woman and her son, who was a student, came in. He did not have all of the ID, but he had the card. His mother vouched for him. The clerk at the polling station, instead of recording the woman's name, wrote "mother". That was an administrative mistake, but in no way was it fraud.

This is the kind of thing that Mr. Neufeld was pointing to as being an administrative issue, which the government is now trying to somersault into potential voter fraud.

[Translation]

Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fair elections act contains provisions that are in no way related to electoral fraud and that have clearly been created to prevent certain segments of Canadian society from voting. In addition, it gets rid of the Chief Electoral Officer's public education mandate. He will no longer be able to discuss certain aspects of the electoral process, including where, when and how to vote.

The bill will eliminate the practice of vouching, which poses a huge problem for aboriginal Canadians, students who live far from home, the homeless and seniors living in residence. They are all less likely to have a valid ID card and would make use of the practice of having someone close to them vouch for them.

Voter cards will no longer be a valid option to identify the voter. Those ID cards are essential for people who have a hard time proving their address when it comes time to vote, and that includes students, seniors and aboriginal Canadians, who sometimes have to wait months to get their status card.

I would like to say more about the first issue, getting rid of the Chief Electoral Officer's public education mandate. This is really important to me. I would like to point out that, in my previous life, I taught history, which included civic education. I know the importance of teaching.

Democracy should not be taken for granted. It does not grow on trees or fall from the sky. It is a hard-won right. We can reassert that right every time we pass our democratic experience on to the next generation through education. However, if there is no more civic education, democracy will suffer, and that is very, very serious. We think it is scandalous when other countries do not have the kind of

democracy we deem acceptable. With measures like this, however, we are starting to look quite a bit like some of those countries we tend to criticize.

Right now, the purpose of Elections Canada's civic education program is to increase people's knowledge of and interest in Canadian democracy. It targets people under 30, including those who have not yet reached voting age, instilling in them a belief in the importance of voting and creating a foundation for citizen involvement. The program has two parts.

I want to talk about this today because I used the program, not just as a teacher, but as a mom, when I went to volunteer in my child's school. Several activities are ongoing. Some schools hold parallel elections. Kids really like it when their teachers bring all of the gear in so they can vote in their schools. They take it really seriously. I have seen it, and it is really something. Those kids keep talking about politics afterward.

During every federal election since 2004, Elections Canada has worked with Student Vote, a parallel election program for Canadian schools. In 2011, I was a teacher, and I can tell you that my students voted. They did not necessarily vote for me, but they voted, and that is the beauty of democracy.

During the 2011 election, almost one-third of all Canadian schools participated in the program, and over 560,000 students voted for real candidates. Their feedback showed that the program significantly improved their knowledge, raised their level of interest and strengthened their belief that voting is a civic duty.

I will make one comment. In the schools in major urban centres where I worked, the students are mostly new arrivals. Some of these families left their countries because of the lack of democracy. Thus, we can show them that it is possible to have democracy, but that it has to be protected. Education is a fundamental pillar of our democracy.

All the teachers who also participated in this program said that they became more confident about teaching civics. There is something else: parents are also affected. When you can reach out to a sixth-grader, that child is going to talk to his parents. He will say to his mother that his teacher taught him how to vote and will ask if she knows who the candidates of the political parties are. We have definitely raised the child's awareness as well as that of his parents and perhaps his grandparents, who may decide to vote. Not only do we have to reach out to the young people, but we also have to reach out to adults who feel let down by politicians.

• (1350)

This is a very important program. I remember very clearly when, as an MP, I participated in the program with grade six students at Wilfrid-Pelletier school. After one of the meetings, the parents of these children told me that I had spoken to them about the importance of democracy, which is a fundamental value.

We are here, we are quite happy, and we take it all for granted. However, we should realize that democracy is always under threat and it must be protected.

Statements by Members

Another activity in Elections Canada's civic education programming is Canada's democracy week, which was launched in September 2011. In the spirit of the United Nations, this activity celebrates democratic values. We belong to the big United Nations family and we cannot shirk this democratic role.

Now I want to address another point, namely voter education resources. Elections Canada provides teachers, free of charge—and I can confirm this to be true—voter education resources that are adapted to different age groups and easily accessible online or on paper.

I can still remember when those large boxes from Elections Canada arrived at my children's school. Even the teachers were amazed. The boxes contained polling stations. The young school children lined up and showed their ID cards. It went swimmingly. I am sure the feeling of being included as citizens will remain in their hearts and minds forever. I can attest to the fact that this works. I used this educational tool in the past myself.

Elections Canada provides a host of educational programs. Why would the government want to make cuts to that? The Conservatives are saying there is a decline in voter turnout and they blame these programs for never producing any results. I apologize for reacting like a teacher, but there are quite a few people talking.

If we apply the same analysis to schools and dropouts, is the government going to start closing schools? Teenagers quit school, so we will close the school. That is more or less what the government has done by saying that it wants to eliminate the voter education programming by Elections Canada. On the contrary, if we see that there is a decline in voter turnout, then we have to find out why young people no longer want to vote. Perhaps it is because we waste a lot of time in the House talking about all sorts of things, but not things that really matter to our youth.

I will conclude with a very personal story. When I was young, I remember civics courses being taught, back in the old days in Chile. Under the dictatorship, it was forbidden to teach civics education programs. I want to protect Canadian democracy. What is more, as a teacher and citizen, keeping educational programs for our children and for future generations is important to me.

•(1355)

[English]

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have had the opportunity to emphasize in regard to Bill C-23 that we need to acknowledge it is fundamentally flawed. It is flawed to the degree that we have had editorials, and many different stakeholders from across the country who have expressed a great deal of disappointment, saying that the bill would be better off being killed than being allowed to continue in its current fashion.

I wonder if the member would support the idea that the government should leave the bill, work with opposition parties, with Elections Canada, and with other stakeholders, who have a vested interest in ensuring that Canada has good sound election laws. These would be election laws that would, for example, allow the Chief Electoral Officer to have the ability to compel witnesses.

We would be far better off doing this overhaul of Bill C-23, as opposed to even attempting to have it passed in its current state. Would the member not agree with that?

[Translation]

Ms. Paulina Ayala: Mr. Speaker, I am a woman who believes in democracy and I fought for it. I firmly believe that the public must be involved in the making of such an important law. The government really needs to listen to the people and to open a dialogue in order to develop real legislation that can put an end to electoral fraud.

The real problem is electoral fraud. We have to be able to work together. By “together”, I do not mean the majority government alone. I mean everyone, even those who think in terms of red and black. Regardless, we must agree to change this legislation in order to prevent electoral fraud.

We need to work together to change things. I agree with the member in that regard.

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for speaking about our motion today. I believe that she truly understands the issues.

I would like to raise a point that the Chief Electoral Officer raised when he appeared before the committee last week. Elections Canada will no longer be able to advertise or to encourage people to vote. It cannot even promote voter participation.

On this issue, Mr. Mayrand said:

I am unaware of any democracy in which such limitations are imposed on the electoral agency, and I strongly feel that an amendment in this regard is essential.

Could my colleague comment on the fact that, right now, no democracy in the world has such measures to censor their elections agencies? In her opinion, what message does this send to other countries? I would like her to talk about her experience.

Ms. Paulina Ayala: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for her question.

I come from a country where, during a period of dictatorship, people were not allowed to teach about or provide training on civil rights. That country is Chile. We were able to overcome that obstacle and now Chile is a democracy.

This measure is unacceptable. We need to inform people about democratic values. I completely agree with the Chief Electoral Officer's position.

•(1400)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Bruce Stanton): The hon. member for Honoré-Mercier will have a minute and a half left for questions and comments when the House resumes debate on this motion.

STATEMENTS BY MEMBERS

[Translation]

NEW MINISTER OF FINANCE

Mr. Louis Plamondon (Bas-Richelieu—Nicolet—Bécancour, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the appointment of the new Minister of Finance does not bode well for Quebeckers.

Statements by Members

Since he was the former executive director of the Ontario Securities Commission, it is very likely that he will pursue his predecessor's desire to create a Canada-wide securities commission and that he will continue attempts to take away Quebec's jurisdiction to benefit Toronto.

Furthermore, his ties to the oil industry and his attempts to reduce environmental requirements are well known, which means that we could end up seeing measures that are even more lenient towards the big oil companies.

By calling those who are opposed to blindly increasing oil sands production radicals, he has proven once again that our public finances will be managed based on ideology instead of fact.

* * *

[*English*]**JEFFREY MACDONALD**

Mr. Robert Sopuck (Dauphin—Swan River—Marquette, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Manitoba Conservatives have lost a good friend in Jeff MacDonald. Growing up on a farm near Minnedosa, Jeff was a political institution. He worked at the legislature for Premier Gary Filmon's minister of agriculture, and was the project manager for the Economic Development Board of Cabinet. Federally, he worked in my riding office.

Many candidates, me included, are indebted to Jeff for his community knowledge and advice as he managed successful nomination and election campaigns over three decades.

Jeff attended the University of Manitoba, where he received a diploma in agriculture. He went to work at Assiniboine Community College, but his heart always remained on the family farm.

Jeff grew up in a political home where politics was always a part of the discussion. He attributed much of his interest to his mother, who was an avid Conservative volunteer.

Jeff MacDonald was a Conservative's Conservative. He also loved hockey, curling, baseball, golf, and spending time with his nephews and nieces and cheering them on to victory.

Canada needs more people like Jeff MacDonald who give of themselves to the political process.

Jeff will be sadly missed by his many friends and his family.

* * *

GREEK INDEPENDENCE DAY

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, March 25 is a cherished day in the calendar for Greek Canadians. Greek Independence Day celebrates the start of Greece's liberation struggle from the Ottoman Empire in 1821.

As the MP for Toronto—Danforth, it is an honour to be one of the participants in the annual parade on the Danforth. Yesterday it was also my special honour to lay a commemorative wreath before the statue of one of Greece's, and indeed my own community's, greatest historical figures, Alexander the Great, in the parkette that is one of the prides of Greektown, on the Danforth BIA.

At this time of year, I also think of Greece as the cradle of a value so central to my party that it is also our middle name: New Democratic Party.

As I said to a gathering of the Pan-Macedonian Association yesterday, there may not be a better time than now for us to thank Greece for the gift to the world of democracy.

Best wishes. Long live a democratic Greece. Long live a democratic Canada.

* * *

XTREME HOCKEY NIGHT

Mr. Brian Storseth (Westlock—St. Paul, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to share with Canadians and hockey fans, such as my niece Xeina, exciting news about the Xtreme Hockey Night charity event that I will be hosting once again this year.

Last year, the event raised over \$100,000 for nine different local community organizations, such as the St. Paul women's shelter. This year it is promising to be even more successful.

We will also be honouring three men with local roots, who have demonstrated where hard work and dedication can take us in the world today. Wilf Martin and Pierre Dechaine are being recognized for their success in amateur and professional hockey. Guy de Moissac, a mentor to many, will be recognized for his role in helping aspiring athletes and being a core builder of hockey in our community.

What is more, our afternoon hockey game will feature local greats, along with members of Parliament from across Canada.

I thank the fundraising committee for its hard work, and our sponsors for making this possible. The second annual Xtreme Hockey Night in St. Paul is sure to be a fun-filled event, bringing families together to raise funds for the numerous local organizations that do critical work in our community.

* * *

[*Translation*]**INTERNATIONAL ARMS TRADE TREATY**

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, in April 2013, Canada and 153 other countries voted in favour of the principle of a UN resolution regarding an international arms trade treaty.

Since then, 116 countries have signed the treaty, including our allies Australia, the United Kingdom, France, Germany, Poland and even the United States. What is Canada doing? It continues to analyze the issue, one year after the vote. We are now part of a group that involves Russia, North Korea and Syria—countries that have yet to sign.

Statements by Members

We are supposedly studying the repercussions for our domestic market. That sort of excuse did not hinder our allies, a number of whom are at the ratification stage. Our government is still pandering to its base. This is no time to procrastinate. It is time for Canada to sign the treaty.

* * *

• (1405)

[English]

ORANGEVILLE LIONS CLUB

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today I have the honour of recognizing the 65th anniversary of the Orangeville Lions Club.

We can thank the Lions for initiating school crossing guards in Orangeville in 1950; selling light bulbs, with the proceeds going to children's books at our public library; the infamous Lions *TV Bingo*; supporting the construction of the Tony Rose Arena; donating over \$600,000 to Headwaters Hospital; constructing the Lions BMX park; hosting the annual Home and Garden Show as well as Lobsterfest; and the building of Murray's Mountain.

This is just a small overview of the many outstanding contributions this exceptional club has given to our most appreciative community.

On behalf of the residents of Dufferin—Caledon, I would like to sincerely congratulate the Orangeville Lions Club on this milestone and thank all of the members for the excellent work they perform to make our community a better place.

* * *

[Translation]

RAIL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Tarik Brahma (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Transportation Safety Board just released the results of laboratory tests on the oil that exploded in Lac-Mégantic, levelling the downtown core and killing 47 innocent people. The tests showed that, contrary to the classification posted by MMA, the oil on the train was not group III, but group II, meaning that its flashpoint was similar to that of gasoline. How much evidence will have to pile up before the Conservative government understands that companies cannot be allowed to monitor themselves, especially companies that are repeat offenders?

I am asking the government to hire enough inspectors and to implement the three recommendations issued by the TSB in 2014 as quickly as possible. The old DOT-111 cars are not made to transport highly flammable oil. The government must not wait for the next catastrophe. Those cars have to be replaced now.

* * *

[English]

PARALYMPIC WINTER GAMES

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today it is my pleasure to recognize one of the greatest performances in Paralympics history.

On March 10, Canmore's Brian McKeever won our country's first gold medal of the 2014 Paralympics, winning the men's 20-kilometre visually impaired cross-country race.

But he was not done there. On March 12, Brian skied one of the greatest races in Canadian history. The shortest of cross-country disciplines, the one-kilometre race leaves virtually no room for error. Near the beginning, Brian fell to the snow after getting tangled up with a competitor. Displaying true Canadian character, Brian rose to his feet and overtook not one, not two, but three opponents to win the gold.

Brian capped off his Paralympics with a third gold medal in the 10-kilometre race, setting the Canadian record by winning 10 gold medals in a career.

On behalf of all Canadians, it is my honour to congratulate Brian and all of Canada's paralympic athletes for their outstanding performances and for inspiring us all.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Ms. Wai Young (Vancouver South, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in a competitive global economy, diversified trade is a path toward economic growth and jobs for all Canadians.

This month, our government successfully negotiated the historic Canada–Korea free trade agreement, Canada's first FTA in Asia. Through tariff reductions, this agreement is projected to boost Canadian exports to South Korea by over 30%, and grow the Canadian economy by \$1.7 billion every year. It will also level the playing field with other countries that already enjoy free trade with Korea.

British Columbia, the heart of Canada's Asia-Pacific Gateway, will realize significant benefits for workers and businesses. In fact, the agreement will eliminate tariffs on almost all of B.C.'s exports to Korea, including natural resources, agriculture, seafood, wine, and fruit.

Our government is getting the job done. Our ambitious trade agenda is working, and together we are building a bright future for all Canadians.

Statements by Members

●(1410)

*[Translation]***SEALING INDUSTRY**

Mr. Philip Toone (Gaspésie—Îles-de-la-Madeleine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this week marks the start of the sealing season, which is open in the Magdalen Islands. The seal hunt is an integral part of the islanders' way of life, and the hunt is sustainable, responsible and necessary. Every year the people of the Magdalen Islands organize the Rendez-vous Loup-marin on the archipelago, an event that pays tribute to those who continue this fine tradition through their work.

Over the course of the last few decades, many islanders have tried to establish seal product businesses, but have been thwarted by a lack of support and resources. Nonetheless, today a number of them have managed to succeed with innovative products and services. The time has come to support our hunters in order to develop this sustainable economy and create good jobs. As a new hunting season opens, I ask the people of the Magdalen Islands to be careful and I wish them a very successful hunt.

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*[English]***MERRILL HENDERSON**

Mr. Robert Goguen (Moncton—Riverview—Dieppe, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is with great sadness that I stand today to announce the passing of a constituent and dear friend, Merrill Henderson.

Merrill Henderson was a five-time councillor and five-time deputy mayor for the City of Moncton. He was instrumental in countless projects and continually worked for the betterment of our community.

Merrill never shied away from hard work and what was difficult. He was a wise, sympathetic, and tireless worker who left no stone unturned in the accomplishment of whatever he undertook. The tasks assigned to him were often those most difficult. He was a perfect example of a dedicated and passionate public servant who devoted his life to helping others. He cared greatly about his colleagues and his employees, and he will be remembered for his humility, generosity and, above all, his integrity.

This is a great loss not only for those who knew him personally but also for the whole of the Greater Moncton community. He will be sadly missed.

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MEMBER FOR TRINITY—SPADINA

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Outremont, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I stand today to speak with mixed emotions about a friend and colleague, the former member of Parliament for Trinity—Spadina, Olivia Chow.

[Translation]

I will always remember the first time I met Olivia. She and Jack had invited Catherine and me to a dinner in Hudson to discuss their progressive vision for the country. That was the start of a lifelong friendship.

[English]

As an MP, Olivia brought an extraordinary energy and determination to her job that won the respect of MPs on both sides of the House and of Canadians across the country. She was a strong voice for her beloved City of Toronto, and she used her critic roles to fight for what she believed in: better transit; fairer immigration; and affordable child care.

Olivia represented the best of what this place could be. On behalf of New Democrats, I would like to thank Olivia Chow and to wish her every success. Our loss is Toronto's gain.

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PARALYMPIC WINTER GAMES

Ms. Joan Crockatt (Calgary Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on March 16, the Sochi Paralympic Winter Games ended a fantastic week and a half of competition that saw Canada win 16 medals, ranking third in the world. Heroes emerged, like visually impaired skier Brian McKeever, a Calgary native—even though I know the member for Wild Rose would also love to lay claim to him. Brian fell during one of the races, yet showed such great determination that he got up, dug in, and went on to win gold.

Josh Dueck, who carried the Canadian flag at the closing ceremonies, won gold and silver in para-alpine skiing and is a talented athlete, a fierce competitor, and a wonderful ambassador for sport in Canada.

My heartfelt congratulations to our entire Canadian paralympic team. They embody the values of courage, determination, inspiration, and equality. Many of them went on to have performances that gave us spectacular and moving moments on the podium.

Our government is so proud to support them.

* * *

WORLD TUBERCULOSIS DAY

Ms. Kirsty Duncan (Etobicoke North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, today is World Tuberculosis Day, and this year's theme is "Reach the 3 million". While TB is curable, current efforts to find, treat, and cure everyone who gets the disease are not sufficient. Of the nine million people a year who get sick with TB, three million are missed by health systems.

Many of these three million people live in the world's poorest, most vulnerable communities, or are among marginalized populations such as indigenous peoples, internally displaced persons, and refugees.

Let us work to overcome today's TB challenges: treating the three million people missed by health systems; slow progress in tackling multi-drug resistant TB; and increased and prompt delivery of antiretroviral therapy for TB patients living with HIV.

Oral Questions

Let us ensure that TB REACH, an initiative of the Stop TB Partnership, is funded, and that everyone suffering from TB has access to diagnosis, treatment, and cure.

* * *

• (1415)

PUBLIC SAFETY

Mr. David Wilks (Kootenay—Columbia, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canadian families expect safe and healthy communities in which to raise their children. Dangerous and addictive drugs are inherent dangers to society, represented by drug dealers, the risks associated in their use, and impacts on communities as a whole.

As we have seen with the recent B.C. audit of the Portland Hotel Society, even once a court-ordered permit has been granted for an injection site, taxpayer dollars are wasted and provincial NDP politicians get paid trips to Disneyland.

The respect for communities act would make organizations like the Portland Hotel Society submit a financial plan when they seek continued approval of their operations. Communities deserve a say before a drug injection site opens in their neighbourhood and they deserve to know that their tax dollars are not paying for NDP junkets.

* * *

SUPREME COURT OF CANADA

Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims (Newton—North Delta, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on Friday, the Supreme Court quite rightly checked the power of the PMO and ruled that the Prime Minister cannot ignore the law or unilaterally amend the Canadian Constitution.

Unfortunately, not all Conservative members understood what was going on. One took to social media to say that by interpreting the Constitution, the Supreme Court was undermining our “system of checks and balances in Canada”.

For the benefit of my Conservative colleagues, let me explain. The Supreme Court interprets laws passed by Parliament based on a document called the Constitution, and in particular the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. That Conservatives do not understand the role the court plays in protecting provincial jurisdiction and individual rights is, at best, disturbing.

Canadians deserve better.

* * *

UKRAINE

Mr. James Bezan (Selkirk—Interlake, CPC): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend the Prime Minister made a historic visit to Ukraine. He was the first G7 leader to meet with Ukraine's interim government.

This visit reaffirms Canada's strong support for the new Government of Ukraine as it undertakes a new course that is based on the principles of freedom, democracy, and the rule of law. The Prime Minister also took this opportunity to once again condemn Russia's illegal military occupation of Ukraine and to reiterate the withdrawal of all Russian forces from Crimea.

Our government stands in solidarity with those courageous Ukrainians who aspire to a free and democratic Ukraine. Although the situation in Ukraine remains fragile and fluid, the priority of our government is the economic and political stability of Ukraine. Our government continues to stand ready to assist Ukraine through this historic moment in its history. I wish to express my gratitude to our Prime Minister, our government, and this Parliament for their strong support of Ukraine.

ORAL QUESTIONS

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the situation in Ukraine continues to escalate. Russian forces are expanding their takeover of Crimea. They are conducting massive military exercises on Ukraine's border. Russia is now even imposing sanctions on Canadians.

Can the government update us on what action Canada is taking with our allies in response to Russia's criminal assault on Ukraine?

[Translation]

Can the government give us an update on the situation in Ukraine and the new measures that Canada plans to take with respect to Russia?

[English]

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government has taken a strong stance in support of Ukraine. We will continue to take action to limit the capabilities of individuals responsible for undermining Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and facilitating Russian military action against Ukraine.

We have imposed travel bans and economic sanctions against a number of Russian and Ukrainian individuals. Most recently, the latest round of sanctions was imposed just last week.

We will continue to voice our extreme displeasure with the Russian Federation on a variety of levels and will continue to cooperate closely with our G7 partners and allies.

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court rejected the appointment of Marc Nadon to the highest court in this country.

The court's ruling was clear: the Prime Minister appointed someone who was not eligible, and his amendments to the Supreme Court Act were unilateral and illegal.

Can the Minister of Justice tell us once and for all that the Conservatives will accept the Supreme Court's decision, that Marc Nadon's appointment was inadmissible, and that they will not try to get around the ruling in any way?

Oral Questions

● (1420)

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, before Judge Nadon was appointed, the minister of justice sought the opinion of former Supreme Court justices Binnie and Charron. Their opinion was analyzed and was supported by another former Supreme Court justice, as well as a respected constitutional law professor.

That is why we were genuinely surprised by the Supreme Court's decision. We think that all parties would agree that Judge Nadon is a distinguished and well-respected legal expert. We are currently reviewing the details of the decision.

* * *

SECURITIES

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is just one disaster after another with this member.

The Nadon fiasco is just one example among many where the Conservatives have refused to follow the rules, consult the provinces or work with the opposition.

Here is another example: the former finance minister used every trick in the book to circumvent the Constitution and ignore the Supreme Court by imposing a national securities commission, despite provincial opposition.

Will the new Minister of Finance commit to abandoning this unilateral plan for a national securities commission and start following the rules and the Supreme Court decision and respecting the provinces?

[*English*]

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am honoured to stand for the first time in this House as Canada's Minister of Finance and to follow in the footsteps of my great predecessor, the MP for Whitby—Oshawa.

[*Translation*]

I appreciate the warm wishes I have received from across the country.

[*English*]

I hope that the leader will give the NDP critic an opportunity to ask a question. After all, he paid \$40,000 for the privilege.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): So, Mr. Speaker, the answer is no; they are not going to follow the Supreme Court ruling.

[*Translation*]

All across the country, Canadians oppose the Conservatives' electoral reform. Thousands of people want their voices to be heard and are taking part in public consultations held by the NDP. These consultations became necessary because the Conservatives refused to consult Canadians. However, it is not too late for the Conservatives.

I therefore invite the Minister of State for Democratic Reform to take part in a consultation being organized by the NDP.

Is he willing to come to Gatineau next Saturday to hear what Canadians have to say about his botched bill?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for his invitation. It is very kind, and I very much appreciate his gesture.

I invite all Canadians and the NDP to call witnesses to appear before the committee, so that we can examine the fair elections act. The bill will protect the interests of our system, improve our electoral system and protect our democracy.

[*English*]

Hon. Thomas Mulcair (Leader of the Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the minister will not listen to Canadians at public hearings, but will he listen to the hundreds of political science and law professors warning that the bill would make it more difficult to vote?

Will he listen to the Chief Electoral Officer who said that, under the bill, "...Canadians will be denied the right to vote".

Will he listen to the *Ottawa Citizen* that said the bill radically restricts the role of Elections Canada or *The Globe and Mail* that said, quite simply, the bill deserves to die?

The bill is not about improving democracy, is it? It is really about improving the Conservatives' chances in the next election.

● (1425)

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, let me cite an expert right here who commented recently, after it was revealed that there were 50,000 serious irregularities relating to vouching. This expert said:

It goes to a fundamental question of the defence of our democratic institutions... If we can't even guarantee that the people who are voting are entitled to vote, and that can throw off the results of an election, all is being lost.

Do members know who said that? It was the leader of the NDP.

* * *

INFRASTRUCTURE

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I welcome the new finance minister to his role, where he is going to be deciding how much the government will invest in infrastructure.

On April 1, federal infrastructure funding is set to be cut by 90% because his predecessor made this cut to try to balance the books before the election.

However, these cuts will hurt middle class families, who will face rising property taxes.

Would the new finance minister reverse this cut, put middle class families first, and fix our crumbling infrastructure?

Oral Questions

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, it is very interesting to hear this MP say my predecessor worked to balance the budget, when his leader said the budget would balance by itself. We know that is strongly different. We have no lessons to take from the Liberal Party regarding infrastructure funding. Billions of dollars have been invested since 2006, and billions will continue to flow. Since 2007, we have invested \$33 billion.

Hon. Scott Brison (Kings—Hants, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, that money is largely back-end loaded. In fact, on April 1, the fund will be cut by almost 90% and it will not return to today's levels until 2019.

We still have communities with crumbling roads and bridges, overcrowded public transit, and outdated water treatment plants. To fix these problems, communities are going to have to hike property taxes, and that will hurt middle class families.

Why is the finance minister forcing communities to hike their property taxes or just to wait five years to fix crumbling infrastructure?

Hon. Denis Lebel (Minister of Infrastructure, Communities and Intergovernmental Affairs and Minister of the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the preamble is totally wrong. Earlier this year, we announced the details of the longest and largest infrastructure plan in Canada's history: the \$53 billion building Canada plan. We have sent the renewals of the gas tax fund to all the provinces since November 5, many are on the way to being signed, and we will invest this money very soon.

[*Translation*]

Mr. Marc Garneau (Westmount—Ville-Marie, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, there is just one week left before the beginning of the new fiscal year, and the Conservatives are celebrating by cutting the building Canada fund by nearly 90%.

The Conservatives are misleading Canadians by failing to tell them that they are reserving most of the infrastructure money for well after the next election. Yes, I congratulate the new Minister of Finance on his appointment, and I invite him to tell us whether he intends to fix the huge infrastructure gap that the government has created.

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, that statement is totally false.

We launched the longest and largest infrastructure plan in the history of Canada, with \$53 billion. We have already sent every province the gas tax fund renewal and the GST rebate. We are on track to sign agreements with the provinces. Never, in the history of Canada, has a government invested as much as we have. We will continue to do so.

[*English*]

FINANCE

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as the official opposition critic for finance, I welcome the member for Eglinton—Lawrence to the top job.

Let us begin. His predecessor caused great concern among economists and markets when he referred to quantitative easing actions by the U.S. fed as “printing money”. Does the Conservatives' new financial minister agree with that somewhat unique assessment?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the use of quantitative easing did not have to be resorted to in Canada. It started in Japan. The United States is still doing it. We think, though, it will be finished this year. It is a non-conventional way to expand the monetary supply. It was not necessary in Canada because our banks were in solid condition and the economy was not in the same shape.

• (1430)

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, here is another non-conventional idea. The previous minister of finance was also not much of a fan of the Conservative income splitting scheme. He publicly cast doubt that it would “benefit our society”. I am sure the new finance minister's friends on Bay Street love the plan, but the reality is that over 85% of Canadians will not see a dime.

Why does the finance minister side with the wealthiest few and cause the hard-working families in this country not to receive any benefit whatsoever?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the Prime Minister said clearly, income splitting has been a good policy for seniors and can be a good policy for families. Once the budget is balanced, our government is committed to greater tax relief for Canadian families, and as a result of our low tax plan, the average Canadian family pays nearly \$3,400 less in taxes in 2014.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, Canadians deserve a clear answer. The former minister of finance said that low-income Canadians would not benefit from income splitting.

Can the new Minister of Finance tell us whether he shares his predecessor's opinion?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as I said, once the budget is balanced, the government will keep its commitment to further alleviate the tax burden on Canadian families. Thanks to our low tax plan, the average Canadian family will now pay nearly \$3,400 less in taxes in 2014.

The Prime Minister was very clear. It is a policy that is good for families, and that—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Hull—Aylmer.

Oral Questions

Ms. Nycole Turmel (Hull—Aylmer, NDP): Mr. Speaker, let us now move on to another very troubling matter: household debt in Canada. I hope that, this time, I will get a clear answer from the minister.

Can the minister tell us what he expects to see from now until the next federal budget with regard to the ratio of household debt to annual disposable income?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today, Canadian families are better off under our Conservative government. In fact, Statistics Canada found that the net worth of Canadian families is 44.5% higher today than it was under the previous Liberal government.

The historic tax relief we have provided leaves more money in Canadians' pockets, where it belongs.

* * *

[English]

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Ms. Peggy Nash (Parkdale—High Park, NDP): Mr. Speaker, not only is household debt at crisis levels, but clearly the government is doing nothing. Canadians are further in debt, but they are paying some of the highest banking fees anywhere, especially at ATMs. No one should have to pay up to \$6 to get access to their own money from an ATM.

Can the minister tell us if he has been briefed on banking fees and ATM charges, and will he commit right now to take immediate action to protect Canadian consumers?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government puts consumers first. Canadian consumers deserve access to credit on fair and transparent terms, and that is why we have taken action to protect Canadians who are using credit cards by banning unsolicited credit card cheques, requiring clear and simple information, providing timely advance notice of rates and fee changes, limiting anti-consumer business practices, and ensuring prepaid cards never expire.

[Translation]

Ms. Annick Papillon (Québec, NDP): Mr. Speaker, every year, it is the same old story: the banks make record profits while consumers go deeper and deeper into debt.

The banks continue to raise interest rates on credit cards for middle-class consumers. The previous finance minister did nothing to put an end to these unfair practices.

Does the new Minister of Finance intend to bring in legislation to lower credit card interest rates?

• (1435)

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP voted against our consumer protection policies and regulations and our legislation to improve financial literacy.

[English]

Our Conservative government believes that with better information, Canadian consumers can make better informed decisions in their best interests, and we will continue to put consumers first.

Mr. Glenn Thibeault (Sudbury, NDP): Mr. Speaker, making the font bigger on a bill does not help protect Canadian families.

Again and again, the Conservatives continue to sit by while financial institutions are allowed to gouge. Canadians deserve better.

One thing is crystal clear: the Conservative policy of voluntary commitments simply does not work. Credit card companies are now backing away from their zero liability policies, leaving consumers on the hook for fraudulent online credit card transactions.

What is the minister going to do to protect Canadians against online fraud and to ensure that credit card companies live up to their zero liability policies?

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, unlike the NDP, which only talks about protecting consumers, it is our Conservative government that has taken action. We have banned unsolicited credit card cheques, limited anti-consumer business practices, and ensured that prepaid cards never expire. We have also introduced rules requiring clear disclosure of terms in credit card contracts and applications.

Sadly, the NDP has opposed all of our efforts to protect Canadian consumers.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in response to an NDP access to information request to see the Minister of State for Democratic Reform's briefing books, the PCO first refused altogether. Then, after we filed a complaint, it finally disclosed the minister's 200-page briefing book.

The problem is that the PCO blacked out 99% of it. It even redacted what looks to be two thirds of the table of contents.

I have a simple question for the minister. Can he tell us what is in that table of contents that he would like to hide from Canadians?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the decision on what to reveal is made by non-partisan public servants, for whom it has long been a tradition not to reveal cabinet confidences. That has been the case going back to all previous governments of all party stripes.

The NDP should start coming clean about the taxpayer-funded resources it has been employing to illegally finance campaigns, in the byelection in Bourassa, for example. It should come clean about all of that illegal money. It should pay it back to taxpayers, and it should admit that it represents a violation of the Canada Elections Act.

*Oral Questions**[Translation]*

Ms. Alexandrine Latendresse (Louis-Saint-Laurent, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the Minister of State for Democratic Reform's briefing book is 200 pages long. He got the book when he was appointed last summer.

We would like to know what that book contains. However, the Privy Council Office decided to make public only three of the 200 pages, and those three pages were heavily redacted.

Since the Privy Council Office thinks it is acceptable to censor democracy, can the minister show some transparency and tell us whether the book contained information on the previous bill, the role of the Chief Electoral Officer and the robocalls?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, I just answered that question. However, the New Democrats do not want to answer questions about their use of taxpayers' money.

Their office, paid for by taxpayers, was used to train NDP volunteers and for fundraising activities. It is used as a mailing address for riding associations, which is clearly against the rules, and meetings of NDP organizations are held there.

Clearly, the New Democrats are still breaking the rules. They should announce that they plan to pay taxpayers back and apologize for breaking the rules.

* * *

JUSTICE

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, for the first time since Confederation, the Supreme Court has ruled that a judge appointed to the Supreme Court is not eligible to serve.

The Prime Minister only has himself to blame for this well-deserved snub. As a result of his poor judgment, this seat has now been vacant for a year.

Will the Prime Minister promise not to reappoint Justice Nadon, and will he tell us how much longer Quebec will be under-represented on the Supreme Court?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as my hon. friend would know, there was broad consultation with this process, which included consultation with Quebec certainly, with its chief justice and the attorney general of Quebec. There was an all-party committee of course that looked at the qualifications of Justice Nadon. We also sought information from retired Supreme Court justices and a constitutional expert with respect to the path that was followed.

We will examine the decision by the Supreme Court as we continue to move forward in the process to appoint a justice and see that the Supreme Court has a full complement of justices.

● (1440)

[Translation]

Hon. Stéphane Dion (Saint-Laurent—Cartierville, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is unbelievable. The Conservatives argued that the Supreme Court is not protected by the Constitution, that these

protections are meaningless, that the three Quebec judges are not guaranteed, and that Parliament has the power to unilaterally make changes to the court.

The court ruled that these ridiculous claims were unfounded. Why did the Conservatives so absurdly attack Canadian federalism and Quebec's weight on the court? Do they understand that what is meaningless in this whole sad legal saga is the way they acted?

[English]

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, what nonsense, coming from a member from Quebec. It was not this government that decided to table this decision in the middle of the Quebec election.

I remind the member again that in fact we received advice from two retired Supreme Court justices, as well as an eminent constitutional expert whom I think the member is familiar with, Mr. Peter Hogg.

So this is not a position that is somehow out of step with the reality that we continue to use a process that is far more inclusive than that of the hon. member's party when he was in power.

* * *

DEMOCRATIC REFORM

Mr. Scott Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, last week 19 international scholars published a letter calling the fair elections act a threat to Canada's reputation as "...one of the world's guardians of democracy and human rights". This was just one week after 159 experts here in Canada published a letter condemning the minister as a threat against democracy.

Today, a national newspaper ran an editorial with the headline simply, "Kill this bill".

Will the Conservatives stop treating Bill C-23 as a piece of partisan legislation that is only to be rammed through Parliament?

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, the fair elections act would keep everyday Canadians in charge of democracy by keeping interest groups on the sidelines and rule breakers out of business. It would close loopholes to big money, like the loans loophole the Liberals used to accept hundreds of thousands of dollars in illegal donations. It would crack down on illegal calls from political impostors who deceive Canadians. It would make it more difficult to engage in voter fraud. And, it would make it easier for law-abiding people to vote, because they would have more information about the availability of voting and an extra day on which to vote.

Oral Questions

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the fact remains that Quebec has now been under-represented for more than seven months on the highest court of the land, at a time when some very delicate issues are being studied, including Senate reform. The Prime Minister alone bears full responsibility for the failed appointment of Justice Nadon, despite what the Prime Minister's Office would like us to believe, because, if there was any doubt, common sense would dictate that he abstain.

Will the Conservatives promise to restart the appointment process as quickly as possible and not to nominate Justice Nadon? Quebec and its legal community could quickly provide the minister with the names of some excellent candidates.

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my dear colleague for wanting to identify a pool of qualified candidates for this appointment. I consulted the attorney general of Quebec, Quebec's chief justice, the chief justice of the Quebec Superior Court, the chief justice of the Federal Court of Appeal, the chief justice of the Federal Court, and representatives of major legal associations, including the Barreau du Québec and the Canadian Bar Association.

The all-party selection committee provided us with a list of three names taken from a long list of candidates.

Ms. Françoise Boivin (Gatineau, NDP): Mr. Speaker, hearing what people recommend is one thing, listening is another. Did the government listen and really take their recommendations into account? I would remind members that the Quebec justice minister clearly said that Justice Nadon was not one of the justices he recommended.

[English]

Canadians can clearly see that the Conservatives have no one to blame but themselves for this mess. The Conservatives happily ignored offensive comments by Vic Toews about how his critics stand with the child pornographers, and appointed him to a plum patronage position on the Manitoba bench just months after he left politics.

Why can the Conservatives not understand the importance of making the best judicial appointments—

●(1445)

The Speaker: Order, please. The hon. minister of justice.

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the hon. member knows, there is a judicial advisory committee that provides the names, of which Mr. Justice Toews was put forward. As a member of the committee that vetted the names that came from Quebec, she would know that. She was a member of that committee and, in fact, I appreciated her participation.

Speaking of Mr. Nadon, someone said, "He's a great judge. He's a brilliant legal mind". Who said that? The member for Gatineau.

ETHICS

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, in February, Conservative Senator Don Meredith went on a five-day trip to Washington for the National Prayer Breakfast. He used parliamentary travel points, bought business class plane tickets, and claimed \$1,294 in expenses. Senator Meredith charged all of this to taxpayers, despite—

The Speaker: Order, please. I have not heard anything at this point that has to do with government business. He is a member of the other place. It sounds like it may be a great question over there, but we are in the House.

The hon. member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie.

[Translation]

Mr. Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as long as the Prime Minister continues to appoint people who abuse and deceive honest Canadians, the NDP will continue to ask questions.

Senator Meredith was removed from the human rights committee because of his very liberal use of a Senate credit card and because he was often late. He tried to get reimbursed for—

The Speaker: The same holds true in French and in English.

The hon. member for Etobicoke Centre.

* * *

[English]

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, in the past two weeks the situation in Ukraine escalated rapidly. A referendum was held in Crimea, which is still under illegal military occupation. The Russian Duma passed a subversive law that illegally absorbed Crimea into the Russian Federation.

Acts of provocation and violence are being committed by pro-Russian groups in eastern Ukraine. Religious minorities are continuously targeted in eastern Ukraine, in particular in the Crimean region. Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity continue to be trampled by Russia.

Can the parliamentary secretary update the House on our government's actions concerning the troubling situation in Ukraine?

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Etobicoke Centre for his commitment to the people of Ukraine.

Our government remains deeply troubled by the ongoing situation in Ukraine. In response to these developments, our government has taken leadership by imposing targeted travel bans and economic sanctions on those individuals who are responsible for undermining Ukraine's sovereignty.

As we have stated previously, Canada does not recognize the referendum that was conducted on March 16. Furthermore, during his visit, the Prime Minister announced Canada's contribution to an OSCE monitoring mission in Ukraine.

Oral Questions

Canadians can count on this government to stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of Ukraine during this difficult time in Ukraine's history.

* * *

HEALTH

Ms. Libby Davies (Vancouver East, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the 2004 health accord expires in one week, putting the government's shameful record on health care under the microscope. The Conservatives failed to act on commitments, making little to no progress on wait times, home care, aboriginal health, access to primary care or pharmacare. They even cut \$36 billion from provincial transfers.

Why are the Conservatives refusing to work with the provinces to ensure that Canadians have a strong, stable, and accessible health care system?

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to a strong, publicly funded health care system, guided by the Canada Health Act. Our government is following through on our commitment to provide the highest recorded health transfer dollars in Canadian history to the provinces and territories. This record funding will reach \$40 billion by the end of the decade and will provide stability and predictability in our system.

We are focused on working with the provinces and territories on innovative solutions to ensure that our health care system is sustainable and delivering the care that Canadians need.

The opposition needs to get serious on this issue, stop opposing our budgets, and deliver these record health transfer dollars.

• (1450)

[Translation]

Mr. Dany Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the government needs to open its eyes, because the Conservatives' shameful refusal to follow through on health care agreements will have an impact on the quality of care provided to Canadians. Wait times are increasing, despite the Conservatives' tired, old promise to reduce them. Then there is the desperate shortage of family doctors in Canada. According to the Fraser Institute, there was a total of \$1.1 billion in lost productivity last year because Canadians did not have quick access to the treatments they needed.

Why is the government not working with the provinces so that Canadians can get quality health care services?

[English]

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government will never balance our books on the backs of the provinces and the territories like the Liberals did. They cut \$25 billion out of transfers.

Since we have formed government, health care transfers have increased by almost 50%. The opposition needs to stop opposing our budgets, which provide record health funding to the provinces and support nearly 1,300 health researchers across this great country.

[Translation]

AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD

Ms. Ruth Ellen Brousseau (Berthier—Maskinongé, NDP): Mr. Speaker, delays in grain transportation are a major problem for farmers.

This crisis has been going on for months, but no legislation has been passed. The Minister of Transport's requirements are so minimal that even if the rail companies did meet them, they still would not manage to finish shipping this year's harvest before the next one is ready. What a failure.

Are the Conservatives planning on compensating the farmers who have lost revenue during this crisis?

[English]

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC): Mr. Speaker, contrary to that diatribe, our government has taken concrete action.

We brought in an order in council which has doubled the capacity of the two railways in the first couple of weeks that it came into play. We continue to monitor the situation.

Let me quote a young farmer, Levi Wood, who is president of the Western Canadian Wheat Growers Association:

The Order in Council to immediately increase grain shipments will help lift artificially depressed grain prices, generate more cashflow for farmers ahead of spring seeding, and reduce the carryout of grain that will be left on farms at the end of this crop year.

That is his quote. He is happy. We are happy that he is enjoying that new-found freedom.

Mr. Malcolm Allen (Welland, NDP): Mr. Speaker, the new-found freedom is that Davidson's price, in Saskatchewan, is \$4.39, and the port of Vancouver's price is \$11.69. I guess the question is, who made the money in between? It was not farmers.

The fines proposed by this minister are far too low. Worse still, the money goes to the new Minister of Finance. It is not the government that should be compensated for the grain backlog; it is farmers.

Why does the minister not agree with New Democrats that the fines should be bigger, and that the money being collected should not go to the government but to farmers, who have been suffering on the Prairies—

Some hon. members: Oh, oh.

The Speaker: The hon. Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Gerry Ritz (Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the NDP should stop using the NFU for their research. They are always six months behind and out of touch with real farmers.

We continue to work with a number of different groups out there, including the railways, the shippers themselves, and, of course, farmers, who ultimately end up paying all the bills for anything that goes wrong in that supply chain.

We brought forward the order in council which has started to move some 4,400 cars of grain in the last two weeks. That is good. It is a good start, but there is still a lot of work to be done.

We will be tabling legislation in the immediate future, and we hope the members opposite will stand to support that and move that through unanimously.

* * *

VETERANS AFFAIRS

Mr. Frank Valeriote (Guelph, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, some have called the work done by Veterans Affairs a duty, a responsibility, a commitment, a social contract, or a sacred obligation. If it is possible to agree with the Minister of Veterans Affairs on anything he has said, it is those words spoken by him last Thursday.

However, government lawyers deny the existence of a social contract in response to the suit brought by Equitas Society, arguing no further compensation is due to those veterans seeking fairness after their years of service. Will the minister now do the principled thing and instruct his lawyers to withdraw their defence?

Mr. Parm Gill (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on November 15, the Minister of Veterans Affairs appeared at the standing committee on Veterans Affairs, where he stated his support for the social contract on the record.

However, I want to take a second to point out that the Liberals have finally accepted that the member for Scarborough—Agincourt was a disgraceful veterans affairs critic and have decided to remove him. I can only hope that the new critic will better stand up for veterans and treat them with respect.

* * *

• (1455)

HEALTH

Hon. Carolyn Bennett (St. Paul's, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, yesterday at a summit in St. Paul's with all levels of government, we heard clearly from our citizens that they are appalled at the complete lack of federal leadership on health and health care.

On March 31, the 2004 health accord ends and the Health Council of Canada will cease to exist.

Why has the Prime Minister refused to sit down with the provinces, territories, and aboriginal leaders to negotiate the multi-jurisdictional partnerships needed to improve the health of Canadians and ensure the sustainability of our most cherished social program?

Mr. Colin Carrie (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of the Environment, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we are not going to take any lessons from the Liberal Party that cut \$25 billion out of transfers to the provinces and territories when they needed it most.

This is our government, and it is committed to the quality health care system that we have. We are putting forward record funding of \$40 billion by the end of the decade, and it will provide stability and predictability to the system.

Oral Questions

Canadians know that when it comes to health care, this is the party that is committed to the health care system in Canada.

* * *

[Translation]

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, nine months have passed since the government promised to resettle 1,300 refugees fleeing the Syrian conflict, but Canada has actually welcomed very few of those refugees.

In 2013, Canada brought in just 10 government-sponsored refugees, and nothing was done to accelerate the process. Could that be because of the lack of resources related to budget cuts?

When will the government keep its promise and act on the request from the High Commissioner for Refugees to bring more Syrian refugees into Canada?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Canada and our government are very proud of Canada's record and of what we have done over the past three years to help the Syrian people, who are suffering so much. We are among the most generous donor countries, having contributed \$630 million for development, security and humanitarian needs. We also welcomed over 1,100 Syrian refugees last year through our very generous system, which is unmatched in terms of generosity and asylum. We have nothing—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Davenport.

[English]

Mr. Andrew Cash (Davenport, NDP): Mr. Speaker, notwithstanding what the minister said, Syrian refugees are facing a humanitarian crisis and the government has failed to live up to its promises.

The Conservatives are also failing immigrant families here in Canada. Their latest attack will mean that spouses would have to meet stringent new language requirements just to reunite with their loved ones. Family reunification wait times have skyrocketed under the Conservative government. This measure would only make matters worse.

Will the minister reassure Canadian immigrant families that he is not considering this measure?

Hon. Chris Alexander (Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, CPC): Mr. Speaker, just because an issue was raised at a round table as part of the very extensive consultations that our government organizes across this country does not mean it is going to become government policy. We continuously review all of our policies.

Family reunification has skyrocketed under this government because we have been taking action to clean up the Liberal mess for parents and grandparents, by—

The Speaker: The hon. member for Desnethé—Mississippi—Churchill River.

*Oral Questions***HEALTH**

Mr. Rob Clarke (Desnethé—Missinipi—Churchill River, CPC): Mr. Speaker, today is World Tuberculosis Day, an important day in developing public awareness that TB remains an epidemic in much of the world. It causes the death of nearly 1.5 million people each year, mostly in developing countries. My constituents are concerned about this epidemic and would appreciate an update on Canada's actions.

Could the minister please tell the House what our government is doing to eradicate TB?

[*Translation*]

Hon. Christian Paradis (Minister of International Development and Minister for La Francophonie, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question.

Canada has taken a leadership role in the fight to eliminate tuberculosis worldwide. We have made massive investments and are working with many partners.

[*English*]

With Canada's assistance, The Global Fund is saving more than 100,000 lives every month. We are continuing our support, with the recent announcement of \$650 million over the next three years. This is an increase of 20%. Our support is helping to improve access to diagnosis and treatment, especially for people living in poverty. We have helped The Global Fund save an estimated 8.7 million lives to date, from AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria.

[*Translation*]

Canada is changing things and we will continue to do so.

* * *

• (1500)

[*English*]

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Mr. Rodger Cuzner (Cape Breton—Canso, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, when Conservatives announce significant departmental changes followed by the statement “it will be business as usual”, we know the business they are referring to is to mislead, misinform, and misrepresent the facts, as usual.

Last week, the people in Cape Breton-Mulgrave were informed that the government had scrapped ECBC. Will the minister confirm to the House that the region will retain a designated budget, as well as matching current funding levels?

Mr. Gerald Keddy (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of National Revenue and for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government is committed to supporting economic development in Cape Breton and throughout Atlantic Canada.

Legislation will be introduced this spring authorizing ACOA to assume responsibility for the direct delivery of economic development programs, services, and advocacy in Cape Breton. Subject to the passage of the legislation by Parliament, the economic and community development activities of Enterprise Cape Breton Corporation, including the associated budget, will transition to

ACOA. The level of economic development funding that was delivered through ECBC will be maintained.

* * *

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Jean Crowder (Nanaimo—Cowichan, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it has been two weeks since the government tabled its report and again chose the status quo. It did not listen to the voices of witnesses, families, and friends asking for answers and solutions to the disappearance and murder of indigenous women and girls.

How much longer will these families have to wait? Why is the government still refusing to listen to the call for a national inquiry that would bring closure and some measure of justice to the families?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, our government continues to press for police measures that give police more tools to investigate and solve crimes, and continues to put forward legislation that holds those responsible for violence against women and girls, including aboriginal women and girls, accountable. This is what we continue to do.

We continue to fund programs across the country, as the member knows, that work on reserve. We passed legislation that empowered aboriginal women with matrimonial property.

Sadly, the consistent approach of the NDP has been to talk. Our government has taken action. We ask for the member's support of that action.

* * *

INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Mr. Mike Wallace (Burlington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as indicated in our Speech from the Throne, deepening Canada's trade and investment ties in the booming Asia-Pacific region is our priority. It is part of our Conservative government's ambitious pro-trade plan. The recently concluded agreement with South Korea is part of this plan, a plan to create jobs in every region of our country.

Can the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade update this House on what our government is pursuing next on this front?

Mr. Erin O'Toole (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank the member for Burlington for his question and for his advocacy for trade, particularly in Asia. The recent South Korean deal will be a boon to employers across the country, including those at Laker Energy, in Burlington.

I am happy to announce today that Canada and Japan will be holding their fifth round of negotiations toward an economic partnership agreement.

One in five jobs in Canada is attributable to our exports. We are securing new markets to secure new jobs for the future.

* * *

[Translation]

HEALTH

Mr. Raymond Côté (Beauport—Limoilou, NDP): Mr. Speaker, revelations about nickel dust just keep piling up.

Not surprisingly, we learned recently that the toxic dust is not only falling on the people of Limoilou, but it is also wreaking havoc in Beauport Bay. One study also found that nickel dust is even more toxic than was previously thought.

Will the Minister of Transport stop claiming that the Port of Quebec is not her responsibility and impose stricter standards in order to protect people's health and the environment?

[English]

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as the member will know, the Port of Quebec is an arm's-length organization, and as such is responsible for its own operational decisions.

I know that the Port of Quebec has been working with certain tenants over the past number of months to implement measures like water cannons and dust capturing equipment, aimed at eliminating dust emissions from the port.

* * *

[Translation]

JUSTICE

Mr. Jean-François Fortin (Haute-Gaspésie—La Mitis—Matapédia, BQ): Mr. Speaker, the Supreme Court has just delivered a slap in the face to the Conservative government, the NDP and the Liberals, all members of an all-party nomination committee that recommended Justice Nadon, in complete violation of the legal criteria and without any respect for Quebec.

The Supreme Court decision could not have been any clearer: the appointment of the three judges from Quebec must guarantee that Quebec's legal traditions and distinct values will be respected, rather than serve the interests of the Prime Minister.

Now that its appointment has become a total failure, will the government commit to appointing Justice Nadon's replacement from a list of candidates provided by the Government of Quebec?

• (1505)

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, we have done a great deal of consultation, not only with the Barreau du Québec and eminent people from that province, but also with members from all parties of the House of Commons.

We intend to proceed with the appointment of a new member of the Supreme Court. This is a necessary element of the Constitution and the basic functions. There are many qualified candidates.

Oral Questions

STATUS OF WOMEN

Mrs. Maria Mourani (Ahuntsic, Ind.): Mr. Speaker, prostitution is a system of exploitation and a form of violence against women and children.

Does the government intend to propose a new legislative framework for prostitution by making it officially illegal and criminalizing the purchase of sexual services rather than prostitutes? Above all, will it also endorse the establishment of support programs for those people across the country?

Hon. Peter MacKay (Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada, CPC): Mr. Speaker, of course, it is absolutely essential that we respond to the Supreme Court's ruling on prostitution.

The member had many good ideas for addressing the issue, for example with programs. We do not need a bill to provide a comprehensive response to the Supreme Court ruling. Programs are also needed to help the most vulnerable people who are affected by this issue.

* * *

[English]

PENSIONS

Mr. Dean Del Mastro (Peterborough, Cons. Ind.): Mr. Speaker, this past weekend, Ontario Premier Kathleen Wynne stated:

It's somewhere between offensive and inexplicable to ask that people who've worked hard all their lives to be rewarded with a retirement that takes them out of the middle class.

I agree, but I have to admit it is a bit of a head scratcher. I thought she was talking about the 40% increase in Ontario electricity prices, but no, she was talking about the need to impose new payroll taxes. Will the finance minister please confirm for the House that he will continue to oppose Ontario's proposed new—

The Speaker: Order, please. That sounded like a question for the Ontario legislature, maybe.

That concludes question period for today.

The Chair has notices of points of order and questions of privilege, some arising from question period and another more formal. I will go first to the hon. member for Wascana.

* * *

PRIVILEGE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Hon. Ralph Goodale (Wascana, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I rise on a matter of privilege. Under our rules, we are obliged to raise these items at the earliest possible moment, which I am now taking the opportunity to do.

Earlier today, we learned that Russia had imposed certain sanctions against 13 Canadians, including several members of Parliament, and indeed, the Speaker of the House of Commons—you, sir.

The sanctions are, and are intended to be, deeply insulting. They are intended to punish, intimidate, and interfere with the functioning of the House of Commons and the ability of members of Parliament to do their jobs.

Routine Proceedings

The Speaker embodies the rights and privileges of all MPs, and indeed, the very dignity of the whole House. The Russian action constitutes, in my view, a very grave matter of privilege, which I intend to raise tomorrow, and I wanted to give the House full notice of this matter today, because I suspect a number of members of Parliament would want to express their views on this Russian action taken against the Speaker of the House of Commons of Canada.

Mr. Nathan Cullen (Skeena—Bulkley Valley, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I will be making a request for unanimous consent at the end of my intervention.

In response to a question from my colleague from Parkdale—High Park during question period regarding abusive ATM fees, the Minister of Employment and Social Development yelled out from his place, “That’s just a tax on the stupid”.

Not only is this language unparliamentary; it is incredibly offensive to those Canadians facing these abusive fees.

Therefore, I would ask for the unanimous consent of the House for the following motion: That, in the opinion of this House, unaffordable ATM fees are not a tax on the stupid.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

* * *

• (1510)

POINTS OF ORDER

ORAL QUESTIONS

Mr. Peter Julian (House Leader of the Official Opposition, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise on my first day as opposition House leader. I look forward to working with the government House leader and the House leader of the other party.

I will say I am a bit dismayed. We had two very relevant questions that were being raised by the member for Hamilton Mountain and the member for Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie. In both cases they were speaking to public funds that are part of the estimates that are tabled and discussed in this House of Commons.

In both cases, Mr. Speaker, you did not really wait for the question, which was extremely relevant, before you cut both of them off. I would like to ask on this first day that you allow our members in the official opposition to ask the question before you cut them off, Mr. Speaker, because we are always relevant and we are always trying to press for a very effective use of public funds.

The Speaker: I welcome the hon. opposition House leader to his new role and look forward to working with him. I have always enjoyed the working relationship I have had with all House officers, whips, and House leaders.

I will just take this opportunity to refer him to the statement I made on January 28 dealing with this precise issue. In that statement I raised the concern about questions that had no obvious link to government business, and informed members that they would run

the risk of having their questions cut off unless that link was established early on in the question.

At the time I stood up to stop the members, I had not heard that link. If they feel they have a link to government business, I look forward with eagerness to their attempt to establish that, but as I heard it, there was no such link to the direct administrative responsibility of government. As relevant as it might be to public interest or to members, there has to be that established link to the administrative role of government.

I see the hon. Minister of Finance rising.

ROUTINE PROCEEDINGS

[English]

WAYS AND MEANS

NOTICE OF MOTION

Hon. Joe Oliver (Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 83(1) I have the honour to table a notice of ways and means motion to implement certain provisions of the budget tabled in Parliament on February 11, 2014, and other measures.

Pursuant to Standing Order 83(2), I ask that an order of the day be designated to debate the motion.

* * *

GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO PETITIONS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Order 36(8), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the government’s response to 157 petitions.

* * *

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Mr. David Anderson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, on behalf of the Minister of Foreign Affairs and pursuant to Standing Order 32(2), I have the honour to table, in both official languages, the treaties entitled Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of the United Mexican States on Air Transport, done at Mexico City on February 18, 2014; Audiovisual Co-production Agreement between the Government of Canada and the Government of the Republic of India, done at New Delhi on February 24, 2014; and Exchange of Notes between the Government of Canada and the Government of the French Republic Concluding Amendments to the Procès-Verbal Applying the March 27, 1972, Agreement between Canada and France on their Mutual Fishing Relations, done at Paris on March 5, 2014.

An explanatory memorandum is included with each treaty.

*Routine Proceedings***INTERNATIONAL TRADE**

Mr. Erin O'Toole (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Trade, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to rise in the House to announce formally that Canada and South Korea have concluded negotiations for a free trade agreement. This is a landmark agreement. In fact, it is Canada's first free trade agreement in the Asia-Pacific region.

South Korea is a key partner. It is our seventh largest trading relationship. More than 26,000 of our veterans helped secure that democracy.

Today I am tabling, in both official languages, the final agreement summary of the Canada-Korea free trade agreement.

* * *

● (1515)

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

SCRUTINY OF REGULATIONS

Ms. Chris Charlton (Hamilton Mountain, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Joint Committee for the Scrutiny of Regulations in relation to the review of statutory instruments.

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

Mr. Joe Preston (Elgin—Middlesex—London, CPC): Mr. Speaker, pursuant to Standing Orders 104 and 114, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the ninth report of the Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs, regarding membership of the committees of the House.

If the House gives its consent, I intend to move concurrence in the ninth report later today.

CITIZENSHIP AND IMMIGRATION

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to present, in both official languages, the second report of the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, entitled "Protecting Canada and Canadians, Welcoming the World: A Modern Visa System to Help Canada Seize the Moment".

Pursuant to Standing Order 109, the committee requests that the government table a comprehensive response to this report.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Lysane Blanchette-Lamothe (Pierrefonds—Dollard, NDP): Mr. Speaker, as a follow-up to the report from the Standing Committee on Citizenship and Immigration, and as the official opposition, the NDP will be presenting a supplementary report. In our opinion, the report is not indicative of the diversity of opinions and does not present a balanced perspective.

For example, the report does not include the interesting suggestions that were made by several witnesses about transparency, to inform people of the real and detailed reasons why their visa was denied. Another suggestion was to make it easier for people to obtain temporary resident visas to help the tourism industry.

Those suggestions, and many others, are part of our supplementary report.

REDUCING THE EFFECTS OF URBAN HEAT ISLANDS ACT

Ms. Paulina Ayala (Honoré-Mercier, NDP) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-579, An Act to reduce the effects of urban heat islands on the health of Canadians.

She said: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to introduce my private member's bill to the House.

On May 7, 2011, the day after the election in which the people of Honoré-Mercier placed their trust in me, I participated in a forum on planning and the environment that was my initiation to the problem of heat islands. I learned that, on hot days, the temperature in some urban neighbourhoods can be up to 12 degrees higher than the average.

This phenomenon is most common in high-density neighbourhoods, which are often home to the less fortunate. Children and the elderly are especially susceptible to its effects.

Heat islands can affect human health in many ways: an alarming incidence of asthma among children, more emergency room visits, and a significant increase in the number of smog days.

In light of the scientific evidence on the issue, many of the things we do make no sense: new construction takes place with no greening plan, green energy programs are cancelled, rail facilities are built with no green border, nursing homes and schools are located right in the middle of heat islands. What makes the least sense of all is that there is no national plan to combat the effects of urban heat islands.

That is why I decided to take action by introducing this bill, which states that the government should establish a national strategy to reduce the effects of urban heat islands on the health of Canadians.

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

* * *

[*English*]

COMMITTEES OF THE HOUSE

FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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 think that if you seek it, you shall find unanimous consent for the following motion. I move:

That, notwithstanding any Standing Order or usual practice of the House, during the debate tomorrow on the motion to concur in the First Report of the Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs and International Development, the Chair shall not receive any quorum calls, dilatory motions, or requests for unanimous consent.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Routine Proceedings

(Motion agreed to)

• (1520)

PROCEDURE AND HOUSE AFFAIRS

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

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

(Motion agreed to)

* * *

PETITIONS

ELECTIONS

Mr. Larry Miller (Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I stand in the House today to present a petition from a number of my constituents. This petition asks that the Government of Canada ensure that all Canadians have a fair electoral system.

AGRICULTURE

Mr. David Tilson (Dufferin—Caledon, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I have a petition from a number of constituents in my riding who are concerned about the proposed restrictions on farmers' traditional practices, such as reusing, selecting, and selling seeds. These petitioners are proposing to the government that it refrain from making any changes to the Seeds Act or to the Plant Breeders' Rights Act through Bill C-18.

Further, the petitioners call upon Parliament to enshrine in legislation the inalienable right of farmers and other Canadians to save, reuse, select, exchange, and sell seeds.

CANADA POST

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am tabling a petition signed by residents in my riding objecting to the cuts to Canada Post services.

* * *

QUESTIONS ON THE ORDER PAPER

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the following questions will be answered today: Nos. 198, 207, 220, 232, 243, 245, 246, 264, 268 and 293.

[Text]

Question No. 198—**Hon. Ralph Goodale:**

With regard to applications received from Saskatchewan for Western Economic Diversification Canada's Western Innovation (WINN) Initiative: (a) how many applications were received for the first intake, completed on December 8, 2013; (b) how many are complete and meet the program's criteria, and how much funding did they request; (c) how many proceeded to stage two of the application process, and how much funding did they request; (d) how many passed stage two, and how much

funding did they request; (e) how many applications did the department expect to receive from Saskatchewan, (i) how many did it expect to proceed to stage two, (ii) how much funding did they expect to be requested at each stage; (f) what research was done to determine the need for the program in Saskatchewan; (g) did the department find that the demand for the financing available through WINN was not being met by the private sector in Saskatchewan; and (h) how many of WINN's contributions does the government plan to be repaid in ten years?

Hon. Michelle Rempel (Minister of State (Western Economic Diversification), CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a) and the number of applications received from Saskatchewan for the western innovation initiative, WINN, Western Economic Diversification Canada has received 18 WINN applications for the first intake completed on December 8, 2013.

The approval process for applications is still ongoing. We will be in a position to provide final figures once the approval process is complete in late spring or early summer of 2014.

Question No. 207—**Ms. Kirsty Duncan:**

With regard to the National Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security (NAPWPS) released on October 5, 2010: (a) will the government issue annual reports on this plan, (i) if so, when will the annual reports for fiscal years 2011-2012 and 2012-2013 be issued, (ii) if not, why not; (b) what plans have been made for the mid-term review, particularly the scope, terms of reference, dedicated resources and schedule; (c) will Canadian civil society organisations be consulted or involved in conducting the mid-term review, (i) if so, when will these consultations begin, (ii) if not, why not; (d) what section, program or directorate within the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development structure is responsible for coordinating the implementation of the NAPWPS; (e) in terms of previous commitments and new commitments, what resources have been committed and disbursed to support the implementation of the NAPWPS, broken down by fiscal year and department; and (f) will the government commit to making public the results of the mid-term review?

Hon. John Baird (Minister of Foreign Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the government tabled the 2011-12 "Progress Report on Canada's Action Plan on Women, Peace and Security" in Parliament on January 31, 2014. The government tabled the 2012-2012 report in Parliament on March 7, 2014.

The government is considering options for the mid-term review prescribed in the action plan. The review will be led by the Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force, START, in DFATD in consultation with action plan partner departments and agencies. The government has under consideration options for consultation with Canadian civil society as part of the mid-term review.

DFATD's Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force coordinates the government-wide response to the implementation of the Security Council resolutions on women, peace and security. The resources committed and disbursed to support implementation are being detailed through the annual reporting process, including the 2011-12 progress report tabled on January 31, 2014.

Question No. 220—**Ms. Annick Papillon:**

With regard to the storage of wood pellets and the risk of fire: (a) what safety precautions does the government require federally regulated companies to take to prevent fires; (b) how often are these facilities inspected; (c) what risk assessment carried out by the government was completed with respect to the storage of wood pellets; (d) when were these assessments, if any, completed, what were the findings and which of these studies have been released; and (e) what analyses were completed to study the government's potential liability in the event of an emergency or major accident on a federally regulated site where wood pellets are stored?

Routine Proceedings

Hon. Kellie Leitch (Minister of Labour and Minister of Status of Women, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), while there are no specific provisions related to the outdoor storage of this material, the Canada occupational health and safety regulation XIX, hazard prevention program requires that an assessment be conducted of any hazards related to working with this material, and the development of safe work procedures to protect employees from these hazards. In addition, regulation XVII, safe occupancy of the work place, requires procedures be put into place to prevent fire and to protect employees in the event of emergency fire situations.

With regard to (b), all workplaces with over 20 employees are fully or partially inspected each month by the local health and safety committee. This is done to make sure that every workplace is inspected in its entirety at least once a year, in accordance with subsection 135(7) of the Canada Labour Code. Health and safety officers will intervene when necessary, in accordance with the internal complaint resolution process provided for in section 127.1 of part II of the Canada Labour Code.

With regard to (c) and (d), while risk assessments of the storage of wood pellets are not part of the labour program's mandate, the labour program does conduct proactive activities to ensure that employers are in compliance with part II of the Canada Labour Code.

With regard to (e), the labour program does not compile a list of businesses that store wood pellets. Our role is to ensure that the employer complies with part II, section 125(1), specific duties of the employer, of the Canada Labour Code.

As per part II of the Canada Labour Code, it is the employer's responsibility to ensure the health and safety of all employees at their worksite(s) by developing emergency procedures.

The Canada Industrial Relations Board has no involvement in the regulation and inspection of the storage of wood pellets and the risk of fire. The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety has no involvement in the regulation and inspection of the storage of wood pellets and the risk of fire.

Question No. 232—Mr. Nathan Cullen:

With regard to Canadian government oil sands advertising in the United States: (a) in which states did the government purchase advertising; (b) how many advertisements were purchased; (c) what form of advertisements were purchased; (d) what was the duration of the advertising; (e) how much was the cost per advertisement; and (f) what was the projected reach of the advertisement?

Mrs. Kelly Block (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Natural Resources, CPC): Mr. Speaker, Natural Resources Canada, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, the National Energy Board, and the Northern Pipeline Agency are not engaged in an oil sands advertising campaign in the United States.

Question No. 243—Hon. Hedy Fry:

With regard to Health Canada's approval to Mylan Pharmaceuticals to produce a generic Suboxone treatment: (a) what frameworks exist to ensure that pharmaceutical companies whose drugs are granted approval for use in Canada conduct business in a way that is responsible and accountable to Canadians; (b) does the Department have a framework in place to properly screen for, and assess, conflicts of interest involving manufacturers of prescription drugs that produce both an addictive medication as well as producing its addictive treatment, and, if so, can the department withdraw an approval until the conflict of interest is resolved; and (c) will the Minister of Health ensure that no pharmaceutical company is permitted to bill taxpayers for both a highly addictive drug, and the treatment for the addiction that can result?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Government of Canada recognizes the serious public health and safety issues associated with the abuse and misuse of prescription drugs and the burden it is placing on Canadian families and communities.

In the October 2013 Speech from the Throne, the Government of Canada made a commitment to expand the scope of our national anti-drug strategy to include addressing prescription drug abuse. In budget 2014, the Government of Canada announced \$44.9M in funding over five years in support of this commitment. Working closely with the provinces and territories, and the non-governmental organization community, this expanded scope will enable the government to move forward on key issues, including enhancing prevention and treatment initiatives in communities; improving the evidence-based guidance on the treatment of pain and use of drugs for prescribers and other health care practitioners to support them in providing appropriate care to patients; and engaging in public awareness activities about prescription drug abuse.

Health Canada strives to maintain a balance between the potential health benefits and risks posed by health products available on the Canadian market. Products with identified risks, including addiction, are subject to increased scrutiny, monitoring, and risk mitigation. In Canada, the regulation and monitoring of prescription opioids, such as Suboxone, draws upon two distinct legislative frameworks: the Food and Drugs Act, F&DA, which regulates drugs for safety, efficacy, and quality for its recommended use; and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act, CDSA, which controls access to drugs with risk of individual or societal harm.

To prevent undue influence of the pharmaceutical industry on the drug approval process, the department introduced measures to address real or potential conflicts of interest between drug reviewers and drug manufacturers.

Health Canada is an evidence-based organization. The F&DA require that sponsors provide scientific evidence to support the benefit-risk assessment that underpins drug regulatory decision-making.

Under the drug regulatory framework, manufacturers must obtain authorization to conduct a clinical trial on Canadian subjects. This clinical trial in support of market authorization may also be run outside of the country. Results from clinical trials submitted to Health Canada, regardless of where they are run, must be conducted in accordance with internationally accepted good clinical practice guidelines that help protect the rights and well-being of participants and ensure that the data generated are valid. All clinical trials sites in Canada are subject to monitoring and inspection by Health Canada.

Routine Proceedings

Before a drug is authorized for sale in Canada, it goes through the drug review process in order to demonstrate that the drug is safe and effective. For an innovative drug, the standard means to establish safety and efficacy is via clinical trials whereby the sponsor, that is, the individual or organization, must submit a clinical trial application for review. The acceptability of a trial is based on the totality of information and always considers the balance between the anticipated benefits and potential risks to trial subjects. For generic drug reviews, since safety and effectiveness has already been established by the innovator product, a generic drug application needs only to submit bioequivalence studies, usually in volunteers, comparing their product with a Canadian reference product. The results of the bioequivalence studies must meet the standards outlined in published guidance documents. Also, a complete chemistry and manufacturing dossier must be filed. The labelling of the generic product must be the same as the innovator's labelling, that is, for the same uses and restrictions.

Once any new drug is on the market, regulatory controls continue. The distributor must report any new information concerning serious adverse effects and notify Health Canada of any studies that have provided new safety information. Health Canada monitors adverse events, investigates complaints and problem reports, and manages recalls, as needed. A drug can be removed from the market should the benefits of the drug no longer outweigh its risks.

Products containing controlled substances have further oversight through the CDSA. This legislative framework balances access to controlled substances for legitimate medical, scientific or industrial purposes with minimizing the risk of diversion to illicit markets or uses. Narcotics are some of the most controlled substances, and illegal activities with this class of drugs are subject to the maximum penalties under the CDSA.

Question No. 245—Hon. Hedy Fry:

With regard to Marihuana for Medical Purposes Regulations: (a) how many applications to become licensed producers have been received by Health Canada; (b) from which municipality or township does each application come; (c) how many applications have been approved and in what municipality or township are they located; (d) what has been the cost to Health Canada to implement the new regulations; (e) will there be sufficient supply of medical marihuana as of April 1, 2014 to fulfill the medical needs of current patients and, if not, how will Health Canada ensure that there is no interruption in supply; and (f) once a patient submits their prescription or current license to grow marihuana at home to a licensed producer, will the patient be permitted to switch to a different producer if they find a more competitive price?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), Health Canada has received 434 applications under the Marihuana for Medical Purposes Regulations. Ninety applications have been withdrawn at the request of the applicant, refused, or returned because they were incomplete. As of January 29, 2014, Health Canada was processing 344 applications. The treatment of applications received under the Marihuana for Medical Purposes Regulations is similar to the process in place for the control of other narcotics in Canada and requires that applicants demonstrate how they meet the requirements of the regulations. The proposed personnel must undergo extensive security checks by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police to assess whether or not the applicant poses a risk to the integrity of the control of the production and distribution of cannabis under the act and its regulations, including the risk of cannabis being diverted to an illicit market or

use. The applicant must also demonstrate that the activities are not conducted in a dwelling, that sufficient security measures and record-keeping are in place to reduce the risk that cannabis will be diverted, and that the applicant can safely produce cannabis that meets strict quality requirements for their clients.

With regard to (b), Health Canada cannot provide information on the number of applications at the municipal or township level because of privacy considerations. The provincial breakdown of applications processed is as follows: 146 in Ontario, 120 in B.C., 24 in Quebec, 18 in Alberta, 11 in Manitoba, 7 in Nova Scotia, 7 in Saskatchewan, 6 in New Brunswick, 3 in Newfoundland and Labrador, and 2 in Prince Edward Island.

With regard to (c), as of January 29, 2014, Health Canada has issued 8 licences under the Marihuana for Medical Purposes Regulations. Six licensed producers are currently allowed to sell and are listed on Health Canada's website at <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mps/marihuana/info/list-eng.php>. The six producers that can sell have a production capacity greater than 30,000 kilograms and will be offering various strains of cannabis to clients across Canada. It is important to note that individuals in possession of a valid medical document may register with any licensed producer in Canada. The registration is not done in person and must be done either by mail or online. The product is delivered by the licensed producer to the client's mailing address, hence promoting accessibility. Health Canada cannot provide information on the location of licensed producers by municipality or township because of privacy and security considerations for the licensed producers themselves. The provincial breakdown is as follows: 4 in Ontario, 2 in Saskatchewan, 1 in Manitoba, and 1 in B.C.

With regard to (d), to date the cost of implementing the new regulations is \$1,828,650. The current program, which is set to end on March 31, 2014, cost Health Canada over \$16 million in 2011-12 and had been increasing each year.

With regard to (e), Health Canada is monitoring the market closely. A list of authorized producers can be found at <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/dhp-mps/marihuana/info/list-eng.php>. These producers have significant production capacity, and most are now accepting orders for marijuana for medical purposes. Conditions are in place for adequate supply to emerge.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to (f), a patient may choose to change licensed producers at any time, provided that the patient obtains and provides a new medical document to the new licensed producer. The licensed producer with whom they initially registered is required to maintain the original medical document as per the regulations. Currently, the price of marijuana for medical purposes is fixed by licensed producers and ranges from \$3 to \$12 per gram.

Question No. 246—**Hon. Hedy Fry:**

With regard to the introduction of reforms planned to the grant funding programs of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), including, but not limited to, the proposed “Foundation Scheme”: (a) where and when will interruptions in funding occur, how many positions (researchers, staff and trainees) will be impacted for the 2015 and 2016 funding periods, and what amount of funding would normally be available to applicants during these periods; (b) what steps is the government taking to mitigate any potential funding gaps, or extend the funding, for any highly-qualified personnel and trainees impacted; and (c) does the government intend to allocate contingency funding to CIHR, earmarked for gaps that become evident as the reforms are introduced?

Hon. Rona Ambrose (Minister of Health, CPC): Mr. Speaker, to reduce the increasing burden on applicants and research institutions in applying for research funding and to foster research excellence, in 2009 the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, CIHR, launched reforms to its open operating grants program, or OOGP, with the introduction of two basic funding schemes: the Foundation Scheme, which will fund researchers with a documented track record of success over longer periods of time of up to seven years; and the Project Scheme, which is intended to fund projects that can be anywhere from one to five years and will be adjudicated based on the quality and feasibility of the research project being proposed. The proposed reform will ensure that applications will be shorter and more focused on the relevant information needed to support decision-making. The longer durations and larger values of grants awarded through the new Foundation Scheme are also intended to reduce applicant burden and give greater flexibility to investigators for conducting their research projects.

Over the last four years, the research community has been consulted on this matter and has been generally supportive of CIHR’s efforts to implement a more efficient and flexible funding process. Early in the design process for the new open suite of programs, CIHR acknowledged that there would be an impact on the cycle of funding start dates during the transition period and therefore has worked to both minimize the impact and to provide information to the research community as early as possible. CIHR provided the community with the relevant funding opportunities and associated timelines well in advance of the transition period to allow current grant holders to plan for the transition.

A number of measures have been put in place to ensure a smooth transition. For example, CIHR has changed its policy on the submission of grant renewals during the transition period to allow researchers to apply for early renewal without penalty. Researchers have also been encouraged to use various options so that funding in their existing grants is more flexible and covers fixed expenses over longer periods. CIHR has also been working with institutions to identify ways to support researchers during the transition period.

It should be noted that CIHR does not provide unlimited or ongoing funding. CIHR’s competitive processes ensure that only the best projects are funded, and not all researchers can expect to be

successful in acquiring new funding on their first attempt as their current grants expire. In fact, in a typical year, approximately 65% of applications submitted to the OOGP, or approximately 3,000, are from researchers who do not have CIHR funding at the time of application.

CIHR is committed to funding the best research possible and is confident that the strategies put in place will successfully support the research community during the transition to the new open funding schemes. These changes will ensure support to a well-trained base of investigators with the skills and expertise needed to conduct innovative research and knowledge translation activities aimed at improving health outcomes of Canadians.

Question No. 264—**Mr. Hoang Mai:**

With regard to Canada Post’s Five-Point Action Plan: Ready for the Future: (a) when was the government first made aware of the initiative; (b) on what date was Transport Canada first informed of the initiative; (c) were any instructions or comments given by Transport Canada to Canada Post during the process of corporate planning and, if so, what were they; (d) how did Transport Canada analyze Canada Post’s corporate plan, (i) how long did it take, (ii) what were Transport Canada’s conclusions, (iii) were any recommendations made and, if so, what were they, (iv) was a deadline for the review and analysis ever established and, if so, what was the deadline; and (e) what approvals were needed by the Department of Finance, (i) when was the Department of Finance first contacted on this matter, (ii) what, specifically, was its response, (iii) was a deadline for the review and analysis ever established and, if so, what was the deadline?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), Canada Post has a very good track record of keeping the Government of Canada informed of its financial situation. For some time, the government has been aware of the impact of declining mail volumes on the corporation’s ability to remain financially self-sustaining as mandated. Canada Post has also kept the public apprised of its situation through public release of its annual reports, quarterly reports, and corporate plan summaries. In 2012, Canada Post delivered one billion fewer letters than it did in 2006.

As a crown corporation that operates at arm’s length from the government, Canada Post is responsible for the management of its own operations, including the planning of how it will operate in the future. The government supports Canada Post’s efforts to fulfill its mandate of operating on a self-sustaining financial basis in order to protect taxpayers while modernizing its business and aligning postal services with the choices that Canadians are making.

With regard to (b), Canada Post is an arm’s-length crown corporation that is responsible for the management of its present and future operations. The Minister of Transport tables Canada Post’s annual corporate plan summary to Parliament, and the Department of Transport is aware of Canada Post’s declining financial situation. Transport Canada also supports the corporation’s efforts to return to financial self-sufficiency and modernize its business to align postal services with the choices of Canadians.

Routine Proceedings

With regard to (c) and (d), as a crown corporation that operates at arm's length from the government, Canada Post is responsible for its own corporate planning. By regulation, Canada Post is required to submit its annual corporate plan to the minister. As such, Transport Canada does not instruct Canada Post.

Transport Canada reviewed the corporate plan to ensure its compliance with applicable legislation and regulations as well as to assess its alignment with government priorities. As per the Access to Information Act, details of the analysis, recommendations, and any related information are considered cabinet confidence and cannot be disclosed.

With regard to (e), Canada Post is a crown corporation that operates at arm's length from the Government of Canada. As such, the corporation is responsible for the management of its present and future operations. Finance Canada has been aware of Canada Post's declining financial situation through the tabling of the corporation's annual reports in Parliament, as well as through quarterly reports and corporate plan summaries.

Under section 127 of the Financial Administration Act, when a crown corporation intends to borrow, the Minister of Finance may require that his recommendation, in addition to that of the appropriate minister, be obtained before a corporate plan is submitted to the Governor in Council for approval. The Minister of Finance has exercised this authority with respect to Canada Post.

Question No. 268—Ms. Megan Leslie:

With regard to the operations of the Halifax Port Authority (the Authority): (a) what was the total loss incurred by the Authority as a result of the bankruptcy of American Feeder Line; (b) what were the total bad debts of the Authority in each of the last five years; (c) what are the costs and revenues respecting the Halifax Port Authority's management of the Halifax Seaport Farmers Market; (d) what are the costs and revenues with respect to the Nova Scotia College of Art & Design lease with the Authority; (e) what are the aged account receivables of the Authority for each of the last five years; (f) what charities and community programs has the Authority contributed to and in what amount in each of the last 5 years; (g) what travel expenses were incurred by each member of the board of the Authority and the top five staff of the Authority in each of the last five years, and in each case what destinations were involved in the travel; (h) for the last five years, how many metric tonnes of goods moved between the mid-west of the United States of America and (i) China, (ii) India, (iii) Vietnam via the Port of Halifax; (i) what offices or operations does the Authority maintain outside of Halifax and what is the total cost per year of maintaining these offices; (j) what dollar amount is paid to directors of the Authority for meetings and other duties; (k) what is the total dollar amount paid to all directors of the Authority for each of the last five years; (l) what specific club memberships and professional fees are paid for each staff member and member of the Authority board; (m) are barrister society fees currently paid for the Authority president, or have they been in the past, and how much was this fee for each of the last five years; (n) what was the revenue collected by the Authority for each of the last five years, broken down as follows: income related to the two container terminals and their shipping line customers, leases, wharfage and harbour dues; (o) what was the number of Authority employees on August 1 for each of the last five years; and (p) what was the number of Authority contract employees on August 1 for each of the last five years?

Hon. Lisa Raitt (Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the Halifax Port Authority is a self-governing entity that operates at arm's length from the crown and is fully responsible for administering, managing, and operating, on a stand-alone basis, the Port of Halifax, for which it is accountable. Transport Canada does not receive third party financial information from the Halifax Port Authority.

Therefore, all questions pertaining to the administration, management, and operations of the Port of Halifax should be addressed directly to the Halifax Port Authority.

Question No. 293—Ms. Anne Minh-Thu Quach:

With regard to procurement contracts signed by the Department of Public Works and Government Services Canada (PWGSC): (a) what are the limits imposed by the national treatment principle in the free trade agreements that Canada has signed for procurement contracts for food and all other types of goods; (b) what are the procurement thresholds for each free trade agreement below which national treatment does not apply; (c) what are the procurement thresholds set out in the Agreement on Internal Trade; and (d) of all the food procurement contracts signed by PWGSC, what proportion have a total value below the thresholds allowed under the free trade agreements?

Hon. Diane Finley (Minister of Public Works and Government Services, CPC): Mr. Speaker, with regard to (a), the trade agreements do not have limits on their national treatment provisions, which are obligations under the agreements. For procurement that is covered by the trade agreements, Canada cannot give preference to Canadian companies.

With regard to (b), for food procurements as well as for all other types of goods, the threshold for the North American Free Trade Agreement, NAFTA, is \$25,200 Canadian—that is, procurement of food, when the estimated value is \$25,200 Canadian or above, is subject to the agreement. The threshold for food procurement for all other international trade agreements is either the same as NAFTA's or higher. However, when food procurement is covered by any other international trade agreements, it is also covered by NAFTA, and the lowest applicable threshold is the one used to determine whether Canada, when doing a covered procurement, could give preference to Canadian companies.

With regard to (c), for food procurements and for all other types of goods, the threshold for the Agreement on Internal Trade is \$25,000.

With regard to (d), procurement valued at \$25,000 and over is subject to one or more trade agreements.

Over the past three fiscal years, or FY, the proportions of food procurement contracts signed by PWGSC and valued below \$25,000 were as follows. In FY 2012-13, PWGSC awarded nine food procurement contracts valued below \$25,000. The total value of these contracts was \$112,494, which represents 0.64% of the \$17,706,930 total value of all food contracts in that fiscal year.

In FY 2011-12, PWGSC awarded 11 food procurement contracts valued below \$25,000. The total value of these contracts was \$151,423, which represents 2.3% of the \$6,536,876 total value of all food contracts in that fiscal year.

In FY 2010-11, PWGSC awarded 11 food procurement contracts valued below \$25,000. The total value of these contracts was \$169,636, which represents 0.53% of the \$32,202,897 total value of all food contracts in that fiscal year.

Routine Proceedings

[English]

QUESTIONS PASSED AS ORDERS FOR RETURNS

Mr. Tom Lukiwski (Parliamentary Secretary to the Leader of the Government in the House of Commons, CPC): Mr. Speaker, furthermore, if Questions Nos. 173, 174, 181, 192, 193, 195, 196, 200-205, 208, 209, 211-213, 215, 216, 219, 222, 224, 227-231, 233-236, 238, 239, 244, 247-249, 252, 254-260, 262, 265-267, 269, 270, 276, 278, 279-292 and 294-296 could be made orders for returns, these returns would be tabled immediately.

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[Text]

Question No. 173—Mr. John Rafferty:

With regard to the nine regional offices of Veterans Affairs that are to be closed by February 2014 (Charlottetown, Corner Brook, Sydney, Windsor, Thunder Bay, Kelowna, Prince George, Saskatoon, and Brandon): what are the total operating costs by year for each office from 2009-2012?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 174—Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:

With regard to government spending in the province of Prince Edward Island: (a) what has been the total amount of spending in the province each year since 2006; (b) what has been the total amount of spending each year since 2006 in the constituencies of (i) Cardigan, (ii) Charlottetown, (iii) Malpeque, (iv) Egmont; and (c) what is the total amount of government funding since fiscal year 2005-2006, broken down by (i) the date the money was received, (ii) the dollar amount of the expenditure, (iii) the program from which the funding came, (iv) the ministry responsible, (v) the designated recipient?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 181—Mr. Glenn Thibeault:

With regard to mobile applications, broken down by department and individual project, for each fiscal year since 2008-2009, up to and including the current fiscal year, what is the total amount spent on (i) the development, (ii) the maintenance and update, of mobile applications?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 192—Mr. Sean Casey:

With regard to outside legal counsel, legal advice, or any other form of legal assistance provided to government by non-government lawyers, and broken down by year since 2006: (a) what is the amount spent by department; (b) what program activities across government account for the top twenty expenditures used for non-government legal services; (c) what are the names of law firms used; (d) what is the breakdown of expenditure wherein the government was the defendant, by department and by cause of action; and (e) what is the breakdown of expenditure where the government was the plaintiff, by department and by cause of action?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 193—Hon. Irwin Cotler:

With regard to the Legal Aid Program Evaluation Final Report of 2012: (a) what is the role and mandate of the government with respect to criminal legal aid; (b) how was the policy in (a) determined and developed, when and by whom; (c) what is the role and mandate of the government with respect to civil legal aid; (d) how was the policy in (c) determined and developed, when and by whom; (e) what steps has the government taken to provide criminal legal aid; (f) what steps has the government taken to provide civil legal aid; (g) what statistics does the government track with respect to delays before provincial courts; (h) what steps has the government taken to develop national standards for the provision of legal aid; (i) what metrics has the government developed with respect to access to justice; (j) with respect to the metrics in (i), (i) how are these assessed, (ii) when was the most recent assessment, (iii) what was the conclusion of that most recent assessment, (iv) what action was taken as a

result of that assessment; (k) what policy objectives have been identified with respect to (i) the challenge of access to justice, (ii) the challenge of long trials, (iii) the challenge of delays in the justice system, (iv) the challenge of dealing with deeply rooted, endemic social problems, (v) the rising cost of legal aid, (vi) the increasing demand for legal aid, (vii) concerns expressed about whether provinces and territories can continue to increase their contributions; (l) what individual pieces of legislation have been adopted or proposed to address each of the issues in (k), broken down by sub-issues; (m) what regulations have been adopted with respect to the issues in (k), broken down by sub-issue; (n) what indicators have been identified to measure the efficiency and economy of the federal Legal Aid Program (LAP); (o) what steps have been undertaken to collect relevant data from provinces, territories and legal aid plans on the (i) effectiveness, (ii) efficiency, (iii) economy of the LAP to assist future evaluations; (p) what measures are in place to expand the use of duty counsel with respect to ensuring access to legal aid; (q) for the last ten years, broken down by year, what has been the average cost of a legal aid application; (r) for the last ten years, broken down by year, what has the cost been for LAP funding for criminal legal aid; (s) for the next ten years, what is the projection for funding for criminal legal aid currently represented; (t) for the last ten years, broken down by year, what has been the cost of criminal legal aid and how is this figure arrived at; and (u) for the next ten years, broken down by year, what is the projected cost of criminal legal aid and how is this figure calculated?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 195—Hon. Geoff Regan:

With regard to the sale of Canadian diplomatic properties abroad, for the period from 2006-2013: (a) which properties have been sold, and for each property, (i) what was the assessed value, (ii) who was responsible for the valuation, (iii) what was the asking price, (iv) what was the final sale price, (v) what real estate agency or similar private company was engaged to execute or assist in the sale, (vi) how much was each private company paid for the sale, (vii) were there other expenses incurred (fees, taxes, etc) as part of the sale and, if so, what was the total cost; (b) which properties are for sale or are under consideration for eventual sale, and for each property, (i) what is the assessed value, (ii) who was responsible for the valuation, (iii) what is the asking price, (iv) what real estate agency or similar private company is being engaged to execute or assist in the sale, (v) how much is each private company being paid for the sale; and (c) specifically regarding the sale of MacDonald House in London, United Kingdom, (i) what was the assessed value, (ii) who was responsible for the valuation, (iii) what was the asking price, (iv) what was the final sale price, (v) how much was Savills plc. paid for the sale, (vi) was any other private company engaged to provide services during or related to the sale, (vii) if so, what was the name of each company, what service did it provide, and how much was it paid, (viii) were there other expenses incurred (fees, taxes, etc) as part of the sale and, if so, what was the total cost?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 196—Hon. Geoff Regan :

With regard to Youth Mobility Agreements, for the years 2010, 2011 and 2012: (a) with which countries does Canada have an agreement; (b) how many openings were there for Canadian youth to travel to each country under the auspices of the agreement; (c) how many Canadians travelled to each country under the auspices of the agreement; (d) how many openings were there for youth from the other countries to travel to Canada under the auspices of the agreement; and (e) how many youths from each country travelled to Canada under the auspices of the agreement?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 200—Mr. Sean Casey:**

With regard to outside legal services provided by non-government lawyers, since 2006: (a) by what means does the government select external lawyers and law firms to provide legal services; (b) what role do ministers play in approving which law firms receive contracts related to outside legal services; (c) how many times have external law firms or lawyers been used for the purpose of providing advice, consultation or drafting of any government legislation or regulation and what were the subject matters of the proposed legislation or regulation; (d) how many times has the government sought outside legal advice from a lawyer or law firm from outside of Canada; and (e) how many times has the government sought legal advice, consultations or technical support from any non-Canadian law firm in the drafting of legislation or regulation?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 201—Mr. Sean Casey:

With regard government owned aircrafts, since 2012: (a) what is the list of types of aircrafts operated by the government and the passenger capacity for each; (b) excluding aircrafts operated by the Department of National Defense, how many aircrafts are available for use by ministers; (c) excluding aircrafts operated by the Department of National Defense, how many times have ministers requested and used government aircrafts; and (d) excluding aircrafts operated by the Department of National Defense, how many times have ministers requested and used government aircraft for travel outside of Canada and for what purpose?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 202—Hon. John McCallum:

With regard to removal orders, by country and for each calendar year from 2006-2013: (a) for each deportation order issued, what is (i) the departure order, (ii) the exclusions order, (iii) the specific reference in Canadian law that allowed for the order to be issued; and (b) for each deportation order executed, what is (i) the departure order, (ii) the exclusions order, (iii) the specific reference in Canadian law that allowed for the order to be issued?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 203—Hon. John McCallum:

With regard to materials prepared for past ministers or their staff, from April 1, 2013 to present, for every briefing document prepared, what is (i) the date on the document, (ii) the title or subject matter of the document, (iii) the department's internal tracking number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 204—Hon. John McCallum:

With regard to materials prepared for past ministers or their staff, from April 1, 2012 to March 31, 2013, for every briefing document prepared, what is (i) the date on the document, (ii) the title or subject matter of the document, (iii) the department's internal tracking number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 205—Hon. John McCallum:

With regard to materials prepared for past or current deputy heads of departments, crown corporations and agencies or their staff from April 1, 2013 to present, for every briefing document prepared, what is (i) the date on the document, (ii) the title or subject matter of the document, (iii) the department's internal tracking number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 208—Ms. Kirsty Duncan:

With regard to Canada's Muskoka Initiative: (a) what definition of family planning services is the government using; (b) what are the top five projects recipient of family planning funding and their amounts; and (c) regarding the \$5 million Canada has pledged to fight early and forced marriage, is this new funding or redirected from funds under the Muskoka Initiative?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 209—Ms. Hélène Laverdière:

With regard to grants and contributions approvals at the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development (DFATD): (a) for each minister, what is the grants and contributions approval process; (b) for each minister, as of December 11, 2013, how many grants or contributions applications have been approved by senior bureaucrats and await final approval from the minister; (c) for each minister, which programs currently have projects, grants or contributions awaiting approval by the minister; (d) for each grant or contribution currently awaiting approval from its respective minister, (i) under which program is this grant or contribution considered, (ii) on what date was the application, if relevant, received by the department, (iii) on what date was the application approved by the relevant DFATD staff, (iv) on what date was the application sent to the minister's office, (v) on what date, if relevant, will each grant or contribution be approved; (e) what is the notification process for successful grant and contribution applications; and (f) in the last fiscal year, what was the average approval time period between receipt of a project or grant or contribution application and final decision?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 211—Mr. Massimo Pacetti:

With regard to the constituency of Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, in fiscal year 2011-2012, listing each department or agency, initiative and amount, what is the total amount of government funding allocated within the constituency?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 212—Mr. Massimo Pacetti:

With regard to the constituency of Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, in fiscal year 2012-2013, listing each department or agency, initiative and amount, what is the total amount of government funding allocated within the constituency?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 213—Mr. Raymond Côté:

With regard to outside carbon storage and the risk of spontaneous combustion: (a) what safety precautions does the government require federally regulated companies to take to prevent fires; (b) how often are these facilities inspected; (c) what risk assessment carried out by the government was completed with respect to outdoor carbon storage and the risk of spontaneous combustion; (d) when were these assessments, if any, completed, what were the findings and which of these studies have been released; (e) what were the dates and findings of all inspections completed at the Port of Québec over the past five years; (f) what are the names and locations of each federally regulated company where bulk carbon is stored; (g) how many inspections were completed at each federally regulated site over the past five years; (h) how many inspectors were sent to complete this kind of inspection; (i) what emergency plans were implemented regarding the risk of spontaneous combustion of carbon on federally regulated sites and which department or agency is responsible for the implementation of emergency plans; and (j) what analyses were completed to study the government's potential liability in the event of an emergency or major accident on a federally regulated site where carbon is stored?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 215—Mr. Rodger Cuzner:**

With regard to the Employment Insurance (EI) appeals process: (a) what was the rationale to replace the EI Board of Referees and EI Umpire process with the Social Security Tribunal (SST); (b) how many Boards of Referees and Board of Referee members were there at the end of 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012; (c) why were there reductions in the outstanding number of Board of Referees members year over year; (d) what was the standard for time to hear an initial appeal by the Board of Referees and the result in meeting the standard for the fiscal years 2006-2007, 2007-2008, 2008-2009, 2009-2010, 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013; (e) what was the annual cost to government to administer the EI Board of Referees and EI Umpire appeals processes for the fiscal years 2006-2007, 2007-2008, 2008-2009, 2009-2010, 2010-2011, 2011-2012, and 2012-2013; (f) how many EI appeals cases were outstanding with the EI Board of Referees as of March 31, 2013; (g) how many cases referenced in (f) received a decision from the EI Board of Referees as of October 31, 2013; (h) what was the expected annual cost savings to replace the Board of Referees and the EI Umpire appeals process with the EI general section and appeals section of the SST; (i) what is the cost of the EI section of the SST for the period April 1, 2013 to September 30, 2013 and how does it compare to the planned budget amount; (j) do cases dismissed by the SST EI section specifically state the right of the appellant to appeal the SST decision and the time period to do so, and if not, what is the legal basis for omitting such information; (k) how does the government ensure that appellants who do not have access to or know how to use the internet understand what their appeal rights are, if that is the only method through which they are made known; (l) how many EI appeals have been (i) sent to the EI General section, (ii) heard, (iii) decided since April 1, 2013 to September 30, 2013; (m) of the cases referred to in (l), how many appeals have been (i) allowed, (ii) summarily dismissed, (iii) dismissed; (n) what was the expected goal for the percentage of cases to be heard by the EI general section using (i) video, (ii) telephone, (iii) in person; (o) how many cases and percentage of cases heard by the EI general section have been (i) in person, (ii) by telephone, (iii) via video; and (p) are there official video conferencing centres that appellants must visit to have their case heard and, if so, (i) how many centres were there, (ii) where were they as of September 2013?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 216—Mr. Rodger Cuzner:

With respect to the Canada Job Grant (CJG): (a) how many stakeholder consultations took place since the CJG was announced; (b) where did the consultations take place; (c) which stakeholders received personal invitations; (d) which stakeholders participated in the consultations; (e) how many stakeholders submitted briefs concerning the CJG; (f) which trades or professions does the government believe the CJG will assist in training and what evidence does the government have to support this belief; (g) what is the total cost to date of media advertising for the CJG, broken down by (i) date of purchase, (ii) media type; (h) what evidence (including, but not limited to, statistics, documents and other data) was the basis for the creation of the CJG; (i) how many months of training does the government believe on average will be provided by the CJG; and (j) will training be limited to high demand occupation and, if so, what are they?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 219—Ms. Jinny Jogindera Sims:

With regard to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, what is the total number of entries of temporary foreign workers, and total number of temporary foreign workers present for each of the following areas, (i) Edmonton, (ii) Calgary, (iii) Wood Buffalo, (iv) Lethbridge, (v) Red Deer, (vi) Medicine Hat, (vii) Grande Prairie, (viii) other regions in Alberta?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 222—Ms. Isabelle Morin:

With regard to the Equilibrium Communities Initiatives (ECI): (a) what information did the government have concerning the lobbying activities of (i) Groupe Pacific, (ii) Michael Bedzow, (iii) Suzanne Deschamps, (iv) Pacific International Inc., prior to its awarding of a \$177,000 grant from the ECI to Groupe Pacific; (b) were the four entities listed in (a) registered as lobbyists with the government prior to the awarding of the ECI grant; (c) what actions has the government taken since certain activities in Quebec of the four entities listed in (a) were recognized as unregistered lobbying; (d) why did the government award a grant to that project; (e) what analysis and research has the government engaged in concerning the Meadowbrook Golf

Course area; and (f) what kind of oversight mechanism does the government have over grants such as the ECI to ensure that the government does not provide support and funding to projects that operate contrary to the recommendations of municipal and provincial entities including, but not limited to, the Office de consultation publique de Montréal and the Montreal Urban Agglomeration Council?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 224—Ms. Isabelle Morin:

With regard to government spending in the constituency of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine: what is the total amount of funding, for each fiscal year from 2010 to 2013 to date, broken down by (i) department or agency, (ii) initiative, (iii) amount?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 227—Mr. Guy Caron:

With regard to the Prime Minister's "24 Seven" videos: (a) what are the development, preparation and design costs for this project; (b) how many people are working on this project each week and what are their titles; (c) what is the weekly production cost; (d) how many times has each video been viewed; (e) who approves the final edit of these videos; (f) what equipment is used to produce and edit the videos and how much did this equipment cost; and (g) was a call for tenders issued for the production of these videos and, if so, what were the bids?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 228—Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault:

With regard to language courses taken by ministers, ministers of state and parliamentary secretaries outside of Canada between January 1, 2006, and January 1, 2013, for each of these courses: (a) in what establishment, city and country did each take place; (b) what were the dates for each; (c) who took each; (d) how much did each cost; and (e) what language was being taught in each?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 229—Mr. Glenn Thibeault:

With regard to Industry Canada's Small Business Financing Program, broken down by fiscal year since 2006-2007, up to and including the current fiscal year: (a) what is the total number of applications filed for financing under the program; and (b) how many applications have been granted a loan and for what amount?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 230—Mr. Randall Garrison:

With regard to computer security products used by the government from RSA Security LLC (RSA): (a) what departments, agencies and crown corporations have used RSA products for each of the past eight years; (b) what departments, agencies and crown corporations have contracted with RSA for each of the last seven years with details of (i) contract amount, (ii) contract length, (iii) services or products provided; and (c) what is the total amount of RSA SecurID cards purchased or acquired by each department, agency and crown corporation for each of the last seven years?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 231—Mr. Peter Julian:

With regard to rail safety in Canada: (a) how many railway employee reports relating to safety, or to other safety concerns, has Transport Canada received since the amended Railway Safety Act came into force on May 1, 2013; (b) with regard to the reports in (a), what is Transport Canada's process for (i) reviewing, (ii) investigating, (iii) reporting, (iv) corrective measures, (v) safety advisories or bulletins; (c) with regard to the reports in (a), how many Transport Canada inspectors (i) have been assigned to review the reports, (ii) have performed on-site inspections as follow-up to the reports; (d) how many railway employee reports relating to safety, or to other safety concerns, has the Transportation Safety Board of Canada received for the period of 2006-2013; and (e) for each year since 2006, with regard to the reports in (d), how many (i) were for unsafe conditions, (ii) were for unsafe procedures and practices, (iii) required corrective action, (iv) were satisfactorily resolved?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 233—Ms. Charmaine Borg:**

With regard to requests by government agencies to telecommunications service providers (TSP) to provide information about customers' usage of communications devices and services: (a) in 2012 and 2013, how many such requests were made; (b) of the total referred to in (a), how many requests were made by (i) RCMP, (ii) Canadian Security Intelligence Service, (iii) Competition Bureau, (iv) Canada Revenue Agency, (v) Canada Border Services Agency, (vi) Communications Security Establishment Canada; (c) for the requests referred to in (a), how many of each of the following types of information were requested, (i) geolocation of device (broken down by real-time and historical data), (ii) call detail records (as obtained by number recorders or by disclosure of stored data), (iii) text message content, (iv) voicemail, (v) cell tower logs, (vi) real-time interception of communications (i.e. wire-tapping), (vii) subscriber information, (viii) transmission data (e.g. duration of interaction, port numbers, communications routing data, etc.), (ix) data requests (e.g. web sites visited, IP address logs), (x) any other kinds of data requests pertaining to the operation of TSPs' networks and businesses, broken down by type; (d) for each of the request types referred to in (c), what are all of the data fields that are disclosed as part of responding to a request; (e) of the total referred to in (a), how many of the requests were made (i) for real-time disclosures, (ii) retroactively, for stored data, (iii) in exigent circumstances, (iv) in non-exigent circumstances, (v) subject to a court order; (f) of the total referred to in (a), (i) how many of the requests did TSPs fulfill, (ii) how many requests did they deny and for what reasons; (g) do the government agencies that request information from TSPs notify affected TSP subscribers that information pertaining to their telecommunications service has been accessed by the government, (i) if so, how many subscribers are notified per year, (ii) by which government agencies; (h) for each type of request referred to in (c), broken down by agency, (i) how long is the information obtained by such requests retained by government agencies, (ii) what is the average time period for which government agencies request such information (e.g. 35 days of records), (iii) what is the average amount of time that TSPs are provided to fulfil such requests, (iv) what is the average number of subscribers who have their information disclosed to government agencies; (i) what are the legal standards that agencies use to issue the requests for information referred to in (c); (j) how many times were the requests referred to in (c) based specifically on grounds of (i) terrorism, (ii) national security, (iii) foreign intelligence, (iv) child exploitation; (k) what is the maximum number of subscribers that TSPs are required by government agencies to monitor for each of the information types identified in (c); (l) has the government ever ordered (e.g. through ministerial authorization or a court order) the increase of one of the maximum numbers referred to in (k); (m) do TSPs ever refuse to comply with requests for information identified in (c) and, if so, (i) why were such requests refused, (ii) how do government agencies respond when a TSP refuses to comply; and (n) in 2012 and 2013, did government agencies provide money or other forms of compensation to TSPs in exchange for the information referred to in (a) and, if so, (i) how much money have government agencies paid, (ii) are there different levels of compensation for exigent or non-exigent requests?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 234—Ms. Charmaine Borg:

With regard to tracking by government agencies of customers' usage of communications devices and services: do government agencies use their own (i) tracking products (e.g. "IMSI Catchers"), (ii) infiltration software (e.g. zero day exploits, malware such as FinFisher, etc.), (iii) interception hardware (i.e. placed within or integrated with a company's network)?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 235—Ms. Hélène Laverdière:

With regard to government spending in the riding of Laurier—Sainte-Marie: what was the total amount of funding for each fiscal year from 2010 to 2013 to the present, broken down by (i) department or agency, (ii) initiative, (iii) amount?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 236—Mr. Glenn Thibeault:

With regard to FedNor's Community Futures Program, broken down by fiscal year, since 2006-2007, up to and including the current fiscal year: (a) what is the total number of applications filed for financing under the program; and (b) how many applicants have been granted a loan and for what amount?

(Return tabled)

Routine Proceedings

Question No. 238—Hon. Stéphane Dion:

(Return tabled)

With regard to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' (DFO) consolidation of 11 DFO libraries into four DFO libraries: (a) which groups were consulted or gave input in developing the consolidation of DFO libraries; (b) which departments, agencies and offices were consulted or gave input in developing the consolidation of DFO libraries; (c) which individuals were consulted or gave input in developing the consolidation of DFO libraries; (d) how many titles were held by DFO libraries in each of the last five years; (e) how many titles are currently held in DFO libraries; (f) how many titles are projected to be held in DFO libraries in 2015; (g) which documents were digitized prior to consolidation and what was the criteria to determine priority/order of documents digitized; (h) how and by whom was the digitization plan developed and contracted; (i) how much time was given for digitization prior to the disposal of documents; (j) what documents are no longer available in DFO libraries; (k) what is the acquisition plan for new materials, (i) how was this acquisition plan developed, (ii) by whom, (iii) who was consulted, (iv) on what date, (v) when was this plan implemented; (l) how does the cost of acquisition compare with the cost of retention; (m) how do the findings in (y) compare with the projected trends for the acquisition and retention plans for the next five years; (n) what cost-benefit analyses were undertaken regarding the consolidation of DFO libraries, (i) by whom, (ii) on what date, (iii) what metrics were developed to assess the benefits of consolidation of DFO libraries, (iv) what metrics were developed to assess the benefits of material retention, (v) what qualitative factors were considered in the decision-making process, (vi) how were these considered, (vii) by whom, (viii) on what date; (o) in what way was the public informed of the consolidation plan, (i) on what dates, (ii) with what process for consultation, (iii) with what timeline for participation; (p) in what ways was public input considered in the decision to consolidate the DFO libraries; (q) in what ways was the public informed of the ultimate decision; (r) which non-governmental stakeholders were identified in development of this policy; (s) in what ways were non-governmental stakeholders informed of the consolidation plan, (i) on what dates, (ii) with what process for consultation, (iii) with what timeline for participation; (t) in what ways was non-governmental stakeholders' input considered in the decision to consolidate the DFO libraries; (u) in what ways were non-governmental stakeholders informed of the ultimate decision; (v) in what way were parliamentarians informed of the consolidation plan, (i) on what dates, (ii) with what process for consultation, (iii) with what timeline for participation; (w) in what ways was the input of parliamentarians considered in the decision to consolidate the DFO libraries; (x) in what ways were parliamentarians informed of the ultimate decision; (y) for the last 10 years, broken down by DFO library, what equipment has been requested and provided, and which libraries were provided with additional resources for the purpose of digitizing their collections; (z) for the last 10 years, broken down by DFO library, how many staff have been employed in full-time equivalents (FTE); (aa) for the last 10 years, broken down by DFO library, how many staff have been trained in digitization, by FTE; (bb) for the last 10 years, broken down by DFO library, how many staff have been trained in retention, by FTE; (cc) what partnership agreements or information-sharing agreements do DFO libraries have with other library institutions and how are these agreements impacted by library consolidation; (dd) what service standards does DFO develop for its libraries, (i) how have these standards been impacted by library consolidation, (ii) broken down by the last five years, what service standards were established, (iii) broken down by the next five years, what service standards are projected; (ee) were any collection documents shredded; (ff) were any collection documents incinerated; (gg) what plans were in place to ensure that disposal of collection materials would be done in an environmentally-friendly way; (hh) were the disposed materials considered for donations, (i) did the government reach out to any organizations or institutions to assess interest in the donation of these materials, (ii) did the government donate any titles to any organization or institution, (iii) did the government receive any requests for donations, (iv) how did the government respond to these requests; (ii) what plans and mechanisms are in place to assess the long-term impact of this policy change, and what reports will be published concerning any consequences; (jj) have any disposed titles been identified as having important scientific impact or value; (kk) have any disposed titles been identified as having important cultural impact or value; (ll) have any disposed titles been identified as having important historical impact or value; (mm) what percentage of disposed material was Canadian content; (nn) were any collection documents not digitized before disposal, and if so, why; and (oo) with the closure of the Maurice Lamontagne Institute, (i) what will the consequences and repercussions of the closure of this institution be, (ii) what were the plans and consultations around prioritization of digitalization and physical preservation of the Institute's French-language documents, (iii) with whom did the plans and consultations take place, (iv) are there plans for the establishment of other French-language libraries?

*Routine Proceedings*Question No. 239—**Hon. Irwin Cotler:**

(Return tabled)

With regard to the appointment to the Supreme Court of Justice Marc Nadon, and the information provided to MPs on the ad hoc committee and available on the website of the Office of the Commissioner for Federal Judicial Affairs Canada which notes that “Each candidate was asked to identify five decisions for particular consideration by the Panel, preferably dealing with issues coming within the usual scope of the Supreme Court of Canada [...] As far as possible, the choice of five decisions was to reflect at least one of each of the following areas of law: constitutional law (Charter or federalism), criminal law (or national security), civil law, administrative law, and the candidates’ choice”: (a) how was this list of areas of law developed; (b) who determined which areas of law to be included; (c) by what criteria were the areas of law determined; (d) how were these areas identified; (e) how were areas of knowledge important to the court identified and assessed; (f) in what ways was the particular legal expertise of the departing justice assessed; (g) what impact does the particular legal expertise of the departing justice have on the development of the areas of law sought; (h) how was five determined to be the appropriate number of cases; (i) for each of the last eight appointment cycles, broken down by cycle, (i) how many cases were sought from candidates, (ii) which specific areas of law were to be reflected, (iii) what other judicial writings were sought, if any, (iv) what is the equivalent wording to the phrases identified in the question, (v) how were the areas of law determined, (vi) how was the number of cases determined, (vii) how long were candidates given to provide cases and materials, (viii) were candidates given a choice between Charter or federalism within the area of constitutional law, (ix) were candidates given a choice between criminal or national security, (x) was national security in any way part of the area list, (xi) were candidates asked for academic or research works, (xii) were candidates allowed to provide academic or research works, (xiii) were candidates asked for speeches, (xiv) were candidates allowed to provide speeches, (xv) in what way were the case exigencies communicated to candidates; (j) what mechanisms exist for ensuring the appropriateness, relevance, and probative value of the materials sought from candidates; (k) what mechanisms or processes exist to ensure a candidate’s choice of cases conforms with the areas of law specified; (l) what restrictions are there on the areas of law for which cases could be sought; (m) what ensures that only cases of types that would be heard by the Supreme Court would be sought from candidates; (n) what ensures that the areas of law specified reflect the workload of the Supreme Court; (o) whose ultimate responsibility is the development of the list of areas of law for which candidates are asked to submit cases; (p) what role exists for Parliament in the determination of this list; (q) what is the role of the Minister of Justice in the determination of the number of cases sought from candidates; (r) what is the role of the Minister of Justice in the determination of the areas of law sought from candidates; (s) what is the role of the Prime Minister in the determination of the number of cases sought from candidates; (t) what is the role of the Prime Minister in the determination of the areas of law sought from candidates; (u) what is the role of the Office of the Commissioner for Federal Judicial Affairs in the determination of the number of cases sought from candidates; (v) what is the role of the Office of the Commissioner for Federal Judicial Affairs in the determination of the areas of law sought from candidates; (w) what is the role of the Office of the Commissioner for Federal Judicial Affairs in the process of ensuring candidates provide the information sought; (x) does the Office of the Commissioner for Federal Judicial Affairs provide advice to the Minister of Justice or the Prime Minister on the information that should be sought from candidates; (y) does the Department of Justice provide advice to the Minister of Justice or the Prime Minister on the information that should be sought from candidates; (z) with whom does the Minister of Justice consult on the information that should be sought from candidates; (aa) with whom does the Prime Minister consult on the information that should be sought from candidates; (bb) with regard to the areas of law identified for the Nadon appointment, (i) how do these differ, if at all, from those identified for the vacancy that resulted in the appointment of Justice Wagner, (ii) with whom did the Minister of Justice consult in identifying these areas of law, (iii) with whom did the Prime Minister consult in identifying these areas of law; (cc) with what other agencies or departments does the Prime Minister’s Office work or consult in developing the list of areas of law; (dd) with what external organizations, individuals or groups did the Prime Minister’s Office work or consult in developing this list of areas of case law to be sought; (ee) how much did the development of this list cost and what is the breakdown for this figure; (ff) how much did the overall appointment process cost and what is the breakdown for this figure; (gg) how much have the previous five appointment cycles cost and what are the breakdowns for these figures; (hh) in what ways is Parliament informed of the number and type of cases being sought from candidates to the Supreme Court; (ii) what requirements are provided to candidates, if any, regarding how recent decisions must be in the areas of laws indicated; (jj) if cases provided are unilingual, whose responsibility is the translation of said judgment and who bears the cost for translation; (kk) for whose benefit are the cases provided; and (ll) who reviews the cases if not a panel of MPs?

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 244—Hon. Hedy Fry:**

With regard to Canadians with Myalgic Encephalomyelitis/Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (ME/CFS): (a) how much money has the Canadian Institute for Health Research (CIHR) invested or allocated into researching ME/CFS in 2012-2013 and 2013-2014, specifically into: (i) the etiology, (ii) diagnostic markers, (iii) pathophysiology, (iv) treatment of ME/CFS; (b) how much research has CIHR funded into treating ME/CFS with (i) Rituximab, (ii) other autoimmune medications, (iii) anti-viral medications, (iv) other medications; (c) what strategies has CIHR designed and implemented to ensure that ME/CFS research is fairly funded; (d) what strategies has CIHR designed and implemented to (i) develop a ME/CFS scientific research community in Canada, (ii) ensure that the ME/CFS research community is multidisciplinary bringing together immunologists, neurologists, cardiologists, endocrinologists, system biologists, geneticists, etc.; (e) has CIHR considered creating a new institute to focus on this emerging area; (f) has CIHR outlined areas of ME/CFS research as priorities for funding, and designating a specific amount of money for ME/CFS research and, if so, how much; (g) will CIHR amend the grant application process to remove the barriers for new and stigmatized conditions to ensure that ME/CFS as an emerging area of research has a fair chance of being funded; (h) how has the government, including (i) Health Canada (HC), (ii) CIHR, (iii) Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC), (iv) Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), (v) Statistics Canada (StatCan), (vi) Department of Justice Canada (JUS), (vii) Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS) and (viii) Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) educated itself on ME/CFS; (i) did representatives from (i) HC, (ii) CIHR, (iii) PHAC attend or will they be attending (1) the Invest in ME International Conferences, (2) the Biennial International Association for CFS/ME Conference in Ottawa in 2011, (3) 2014 Stanford University ME/CFS Symposium on March 19, 2014, (4) the Biennial International Association for CFS/ME Conference co-hosted by Stanford University from March 20-23, 2014; (j) to what extent has the government, including (i) HC, (ii) CIHR, (iii) PHAC, (iv) ESDC, (v) StatCan, (vi) JUS, (vii) TBS, (viii) CRA, fulfilled its obligation under the UN Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities (article 4.3) to closely consult with and actively involve people with ME/CFS through their representative organizations, notably the National ME/FM Action Network; (k) when will (i) the Minister of Health, (ii) Health Canada (iii) CIHR, (iv) PHAC, (v) ESDC, (vi) StatCan, (vii) JUS, (viii) TBS, (ix) CRA next meet with the National ME/FM Action Network; (l) when will foundational documents, notably (i) CFS/ME: A Primer for Clinical Practitioners, (ii) Profile and Impact of 23 Chronic Conditions in the 2005 Canadian Community Health Survey, be posted on government information websites in English and French; (m) how is the government working with the provinces, territories, professional organizations, educational institutions and other stakeholders to meet the needs of Canadians with ME/CFS; (n) what steps has the government taken to ensure that ME/CFS patients in its jurisdiction have access to appropriate medical care; (o) how many medical professionals in Canada including (i) doctors, (ii) nurses currently specialize in ME/CFS and how is the Health Human Resources Strategy ensuring that there will be an adequate supply of health providers specializing in ME/CFS in Canada in the future; (p) how is the Health Care Policy Contribution Program being used to improve health care for ME/CFS patients; (q) how is the government working with stakeholders to deal with other needs of Canadians with ME/CFS shown by the 2005 and 2010 Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) including (i) reducing the levels of unmet home care needs, (ii) reducing the levels of food insecurity, (iii) increasing the sense of community belonging experienced by Canadians with this condition; (r) why has the CCHS decided to monitor the extent and impact of ME/CFS, only every four years; (s) will the government review disability programs and services to ensure that they cover the full spectrum of disabilities so that people with ME/CFS have fair and equitable access and will the government review the information and documents it disseminates to ensure that ME/CFS issues are presented adequately and fairly; (t) when will the Canada Pension Plan-Disability Adjudication Tool that guides adjudicators in their assessment of ME/CFS, Fibromyalgia, Multiple Chemical Sensitivities and Chronic Pain cases be reviewed in conjunction with the stakeholder communities to ensure that people with the conditions have fair and equal access to Canada Pension Plan-Disability; and (u) when will the Canada Pension Plan-Disability Adjudication Tool that guides adjudicators in their assessment of ME/CFS, Fibromyalgia, Multiple Chemical Sensitivities and Chronic Pain cases be posted on government websites?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 247—Mr. Ted Hsu:

With regard to scientific research and the communications policies of Environment Canada, Natural Resources Canada, the National Research Council of Canada, Fisheries and Oceans Canada, Health Canada, the Canadian Food

Inspection Agency, the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, for each of these departments or agencies during the years 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011, 2012, and 2013: (a) how many media requests were received, broken down by date, topic, requestor, person requested for interview/comment, method of request (email, phone call, letter, etc.), and approval status; (b) how many media requests were completed, broken down by date of request, date of response, topic, requestor, person who provided the interview/comment, method of request (email, phone call, letter, etc.), and method of response (email, phone call, letter, etc.); (c) how many media requests were not completed, broken down by date of request, topic, requestor, person requested for interview/comment, and reason the request was declined; (d) what memos, directives, guidelines and orders were issued from cabinet regarding the communications policy, including document and file numbers; (e) what memos, directives, guidelines and orders were issued from cabinet regarding specific media requests, broken down by date of media request, date of memo, directive, guideline or order, and document and file number of media request, date of memo, directive, guideline or order; (f) what memos, directives, guidelines and orders were issued from the departments named regarding the communications policy, including document and file numbers; (g) what memos, directives, guidelines and orders were issued from the departments named regarding specific media requests, broken down by date of media request, date of memo, directive, guideline or order, and document and file number of media request, date of memo, directive, guideline or order; (h) what trends has each department named observed with respect to the total number of media requests, those answered and those declined; (i) what accounts for any trends observed in (h); (j) which media requests were referred to cabinet at any point and why; (k) which media requests were referred to the Prime Minister's Office at any point and why; (l) what memos, directives, guidelines and orders were issued from the Prime Minister's Office regarding the communications policy, including document and file numbers; and (m) what memos, directives, guidelines and orders were issued from the Prime Minister's Office regarding specific media requests, broken down by date of media request, date of memo, directive, guideline or order, and document and file number of media request, date of memo, directive, guideline or order?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 248—Mr. Ted Hsu:

With regard to the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario's Community Infrastructure Improvement Fund: (a) broken down by successful applicant's project name, description, project location, postal code of project location, and federal contribution, how many individual jobs, in full-time equivalents, were created; (b) for each of the jobs in (a), how long is each job projected to last; (c) broken down by the successful applicant's project name, description, project location, postal code of project location, and federal contribution, how many individual jobs, in full-time equivalents, were maintained for at least one year; (d) broken down by the successful applicant's project name, description, project location, postal code of project location, and federal contribution, how many individual jobs, in full-time equivalents, were maintained for at least two years; (e) what were the criteria for determining success of applicants; (f) who is responsible for deciding what criteria determines the success of applicants; (g) who is responsible for evaluating applications, and under what authority; (h) which departments, agencies or offices were consulted or gave input in developing evaluation tools for applications; (i) which groups and organizations were consulted or gave input in developing evaluation tools for applications; (j) which individuals were consulted or gave input in developing evaluation tools for applications; and (k) broken down by postal code, how many applications were received?

(Return tabled)

*Routine Proceedings***Question No. 249—Mr. Francis Scarpaleggia:**

With regard to wastewater produced by the hydraulic fracturing process: (a) what federal guidelines govern the release of this wastewater into Canada's watercourses; (b) what federal guidelines govern the use of wastewater from hydraulic fracturing in the production of other products like cement; (c) in what way do the guidelines in (a) and (b) take into account the chemical composition of the wastewater to be (i) released into watercourses, (ii) used in the production process for other products; (d) when wastewater from hydraulic fracturing is used in the production of other goods, (i) is this wastewater considered a release of chemicals into the environment, (ii) must this be reported in the National Pollutants Release Inventory; and (e) what is the volume of wastewater produced by hydraulic fracturing in Canada, per year since 2010, broken down by province?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 252—Ms. Megan Leslie:

With regard to the ongoing negotiations under the United Nations Framework Convention for Climate Change and in accordance with decision -/CP.1 ("Further Advancing the Durban Platform") of the 19th session of the Conference of the Parties in Warsaw, "To invite all Parties to initiate or intensify domestic preparations for their intended nationally determined contributions [...] and to communicate them [...] in a manner that facilitates the clarity, transparency and understanding of the intended contributions": (a) which steps have already been undertaken by the government to determine Canada's contribution to the global effort to address climate change under the Convention in the post-2020 period; (b) what are the government's further plans to undertake the work necessary to determine a contribution by Canada to the global effort to address climate change under the Convention and to do so with a view of being able to communicate this commitment well in advance of the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties in early 2015; (c) which steps have already been undertaken and what are the government's further plans to establish a framework of criteria for determining (i) that the "nationally determined contribution", referred to above, constitutes a "fair contribution" by Canada in accordance with the principles of the Convention, including taking into account Canada's responsibility and capability and other countries' development and adaptation needs, (ii) that the contribution is sufficient to achieve the overall aim of limiting global warming to no more than two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels; (d) what are the government's plans to ensure public participation and the involvement of MPs in this process and how does the government plan to consult with climate scientists, economists, First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples, members of the business community, members of civil society, legal experts, and other Canadians on Canada's contribution; (e) how does the government plan to involve other levels of government, including provincial, territorial, First Nations and municipal, into the overall planning process, given that a substantial part of the overall contribution will have to be implemented by other levels of government; (f) in the event that Canada fails to achieve its current national climate target for 2020, what are the government's plans for making up for any pre-2020 shortfall in the post-2020 period; and (g) is the Prime Minister going to represent Canada at the high-level summit on climate change, to be convened by the Secretary General of the United Nations on September 23, 2014 and, if so, what pledges will the Prime Minister bring with him to the summit and, if not, who will be representing the government at this event?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 254—Mr. Pierre-Luc Dusseault:

With regard to government spending in the federal electoral district of Sherbrooke: what is the total amount of spending since fiscal year 2010 up to and including the current fiscal year to date, broken down by (i) department or agency, (ii) initiative, (iii) amount?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 255—Mr. Charlie Angus:

With regard to data, information, or privacy breaches involving government departments, institutions and agencies, for 2013: (a) how many breaches have occurred in total, broken down by (i) department, institution or agency, (ii) the number of individuals affected by the breach; (b) of those breaches identified in (a), how many have been reported to the Office of the Privacy Commissioner, broken down by (i) department, institution or agency, (ii) the number of individuals affected by the breach; and (c) how many breaches are known to have led to criminal activity such as fraud or identity theft, broken down by department, institution or agency?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 256—Ms. Joyce Murray:

With regard to briefing documents prepared for all senior associate deputy ministers and associate deputy ministers from April 1, 2013 to present, what are (i) the dates, (ii) the titles or subject matters, (iii) the department's internal tracking number?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 257—Ms. Joyce Murray:

With regard to the Buffalo search-and-rescue (SAR) aircraft: (a) what spare parts were purchased during fiscal years (i) 2009-2010, (ii) 2010-2011, (iii) 2011-2012, (iv) 2012-2013; (b) from which countries were these parts purchased; (c) what was the cost of each part; (d) what constitutes "continued airworthiness" of the Buffalo SAR aircraft; (e) what are the safety implications of using engines "of a different variant" for the Buffalo SAR aircraft; (f) how many of the six Buffalo and eight Hercules SAR aircraft are currently in working condition; (g) what were the maintenance costs of the Buffalo SAR aircraft during fiscal years (i) 2009-2010, (ii) 2010-2011, (iii) 2011-2012, (iv) 2012-2013; (h) what strategies are being considered to maintain airworthiness of the Buffalo SAR aircraft prior to the arrival of replacement aircraft; (i) how many occasions were the requested Buffalo SAR aircraft unavailable when called upon in calendar years (i) 2010, (ii) 2011, (iii) 2012, (iv) 2013; (j) how many aircraft manufacturers have indicated interest in competing for the Buffalo SAR aircraft replacement contract; (k) is the Italian C-27J Spartan one of the options being considered; (l) when are the first replacements of the Buffalo SAR aircraft due to arrive; and (m) when will the entire new fleet be fully operational?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 258—Ms. Joyce Murray:

With regard to the government's upcoming commemoration of historic military milestones: (a) which military battles and accomplishments will be commemorated in the next six years by the Department of National Defence (DND); (b) from which program and subprogram budgets will the monies required to fund the commemorations be derived; (c) which budgets will fund the Prime Minister's announced "cross-country consultations" regarding the upcoming commemoration of military milestones; (d) who will be consulted during these consultations; (e) will DND be expected to provide resources to non-military commemorations, such as the celebrations of Canada's 150th anniversary; (f) how much money does the government expect to spend on military commemorations in fiscal years (i) 2013-2014, (ii) 2014-2015, (iii) 2015-2016; (g) from which program budgets will the necessary funds be taken in fiscal years (i) 2013-2014, (ii) 2014-2015, (iii) 2015-2016; (h) how much of the funding for these commemorations will come from Heritage Canada; (i) which personnel and equipment will DND be expected to provide for each of these commemorations; (j) which budgets will cover the cost of transport and deployment of the personnel and equipment for these commemorations; (k) will any funding for these commemorations come from the operations planning capacity, the Canadian Army budget, or the normal operations budget; (l) how much money has been given to fund "Operation Distinction" to date; (m) from which program budgets have funds been used for "Operation Distinction" to date; and (n) will any more funding be given to "Operation Distinction" over the next six years?

(Return tabled)

Routine Proceedings

Question No. 259—**Ms. Judy Foote:**

With regard to the Department of Natural Resources advertising request for proposal, file No. cz025.23582-140223: (a) what is the total contract value; (b) broken down by individual expense and totaled for each country location, what (i) are the expected costs, (ii) is the medium of advertising, i.e. print, television, internet, radio, etc., (iii) is the language; (c) will the campaign promote renewable resources, and, if so, broken down by specific renewable resource, what percentage of the total budget will be allocated to promote each type of renewable resource; (d) what evidence was used to determine the need for this advertising campaign; (e) are there similar advertising campaigns planned or carried out by the government, and, if so, what is the (i) file number of each contract, (ii) purpose of each campaign, (iii) total cost for each contract; (f) broken down by individual organization, which targeted intense and sustained international and domestic public relations campaigns in particular does the statement of work refer to; (g) how does the government plan to monitor the effectiveness of the advertising campaign in the (i) short term, (ii) medium term, (iii) long term; (h) on what dates will the government publicly publish the results referred to in (g); and (i) what steps is the government taking to ensure it satisfies section 23 of the Communications Policy of the Government of Canada?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 260—**Ms. Judy Foote:**

With regard to Canada Post: (a) how is a rural area defined for the purposes of post office services; (b) how is an urban area defined for the purposes of post office services; (c) are there classifications for locations other than rural and urban, and if so, what are they; (d) how many post offices in Canada have been closed since 2006, broken down by (i) address, (ii) year, (iii) urban, rural, or other, (iv) province, (v) federal riding, (vi) totaled by province and federal riding; (e) how many post offices in Canada have had their hours of operation reduced since 2006, broken down by (i) address, (ii) year, (iii) urban, rural, or other, (iv) province, (v) federal riding, (vi) total hours reduced by province and federal riding; (f) how many post offices in Canada have seen a reduction in their total number of employees working inside the post office (such as postal clerks, mail handlers, postmasters, etc.) since 2006, broken down by (i) address, (ii) year, (iii) urban, rural, or other, (iv) province, (v) federal riding, (vi) totaled by province and federal riding; (g) how many post offices is Canada Post planning to close, listed and totaled by (i) address, (ii) year, (iii) urban, rural, or other, (iv) province, (v) federal riding, (vi) totaled by province and federal riding; (h) how many post offices is Canada Post planning to reduce service hours, broken down by (i) address, (ii) year, (iii) urban, rural, or other, (iv) province, (v) federal riding, (vi) totaled by province and federal riding; and (i) how many employees working inside post offices does Canada Post plan to terminate (such as postal clerks, mail handlers, postmasters, etc.), broken down by (i) address, (ii) year, (iii) urban, rural, or other, (iv) province, (v) federal riding, (vi) totaled by province and federal riding?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 262—**Ms. Judy Foote:**

With regard to the Canada-Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Petroleum Board's (C-NLOPB) oversight of operator activity for legislative and regulatory compliance in areas of safety, environmental protection, resource management and industrial benefits: (a) what steps has the government taken to address the issue of safety, as defined by Justice Robert Wells on page 303 of the Newfoundland and Labrador Offshore Helicopter Safety Inquiry Report, with regard to (i) prevention of injury, (ii) prevention of loss of life, (iii) the protection of the environment; (b) what steps is the government planning to take to address (i) prevention of injury, (ii) prevention of loss of life, (iii) the protection of the environment; (c) is the government's definition of safety consistent with Justice Wells' definition of safety on page 303 of his report, and if not, what is the reason for the discrepancy; (d) is it the government's policy to address recommendation 29 of the Report and create an independent safety regulator, and, if so, for what reasons; (e) has the government received any correspondence from the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador supporting recommendation 29 of the Report, and if so, (i) what was the nature of this correspondence, (ii) what was the government's response to the province of Newfoundland and Labrador; (f) does the C-NLOPB require all companies to report adrift oil rigs; (g) on what date was the C-NLOPB first informed that the drilling rig GSF Grand Banks was adrift; and (h) did the C-NLOPB notify the public that the drilling rig GSF Grand Banks was adrift, (i) why or why not, (ii) on what date was the public notified, (iii) was there any delay between the first discovery of the adrift oil rig by the C-NLOPB and the disclosure to the public?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 265—**Mr. Nathan Cullen:**

With regard to the National Energy Board and the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency's joint review panel for Enbridge Northern Gateway: (a) what is the total cost of the joint review panel; (b) what is the total cost by standard object for each year of the joint review panel; and (c) what is the spending by each year for travel?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 266—**Hon. Lawrence MacAulay:**

With regard to the consolidation of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans' library system, for each of the following locations, (i) the St. Andrews Biological Station, St. Andrews, New Brunswick, (ii) the Northwest Atlantic Fisheries Centre, St. John's, Newfoundland and Labrador, (iii) the Pacific Biological Station, Nanaimo, British Columbia, (iv) the Pacific Region Headquarters Library, Vancouver, British Columbia, (v) the Eric Marshall Aquatic Research Library, Winnipeg, Manitoba, (vi) the Maurice Lamontagne Institute Library, Mont-Joli, Quebec, (vii) the Mère Juliette Library of the Gulf Fisheries Centre, Moncton, New Brunswick: (a) was the general public given the opportunity to salvage or obtain library materials which would otherwise have been discarded during the consolidation process; (b) if so, through what media or methods, and when was this opportunity communicated to the public; and (c) on what dates and times did the public, or will the public, have that opportunity?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 267—**Ms. Elizabeth May:**

With regard to the practice of confining laying hens to battery cages, and with particular reference to the fact that resolutions have been passed by Egg Farmers of Canada and the provincial egg boards of Alberta, Manitoba, and Quebec to impose a moratorium on the construction of new battery cage facilities by December 31, 2014, with other egg-producing provinces currently considering the same resolution: (a) is the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food working with industry to ensure that the use of these intensive confinement systems is phased out on Canadian farms; (b) will the Minister provide concrete support and incentives for an ambitious timeline for the phase-out of the use of battery cage facilities across Canada; (c) will the Minister provide immediate funding to the National Farm Animal Care Council (NFACC) to provide them with the short-term funds they need to complete the review of the Code of Practice for the Care and Handling of Laying Hens; and (d) will the Minister commit to working with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency to develop an on-farm inspection program to verify the welfare standards established in the NFACC Codes of Practice?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 269—**Mr. François Lapointe:**

With regard to government funding for the company PurGenesis: (a) has PurGenesis given the government a financial report for fiscal years 2008-2009, 2009-2010, 2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012-2013 or any other fiscal year; (b) has PurGenesis given the government an activity report for fiscal years 2008-2009, 2009-2010, 2010-2011, 2011-2012, 2012-2013 or any other fiscal year; (c) has the government funded any other activities by PurGenesis since May 2, 2011; (d) between 2008 and the present, has the government received any market research from PurGenesis; (e) between 2008 and the present, has PurGenesis given the government any technological opinions to validate product feasibility; (f) between 2008 and the present, has PurGenesis given the government any expert opinions to validate patentable products; and (g) between 2008 and the present, has PurGenesis given the government any expert recommendations, studies or analyses?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 270—**Mr. Ryan Cleary:**

With regard to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, Public Works and Government Services Canada and the province of Newfoundland and Labrador: (a) what is the annual funding given to administer (i) Cod Sentinel Survey, (ii) the Fisheries Science Collaborative Program, (iii) Post-Season Snow Crab Pot Surveys, (iv) Aquaculture Impact on Lobsters and Crab in Connaigre Bay, (v) Eastport Lobster Marine Protected Area; and (b) how many years have these agreements been in place?

Routine Proceedings

(Return tabled)

Question No. 276—Mr. Marc Garneau:

With regard to government funding, providing the dollar amount and the specific purpose, broken down by year from 2000 to the present: (a) how much government funding has been directed to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency; and (b) how much government funding has been directed to the Palestinian Authority?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 278—Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:

With regard to the Homelessness Partnering Strategy: (a) what was the total planned budget for fiscal year 2012-2013, broken down by (i) each province and territory, (ii) each of the 61 designated communities, (iii) each funding program, including designated communities, rural and remote homelessness, Aboriginal homelessness, federal horizontal pilot project, homelessness knowledge development, and national homelessness information system; (b) what is the total planned budget for fiscal year 2013-2014, broken down by (i) each province and territory, (ii) each of the 61 designated communities, (iii) each funding program, including designated communities, rural and remote homelessness, Aboriginal homelessness, federal horizontal pilot project, homelessness knowledge development, and national homelessness information system; and (c) what was the actual spending for fiscal year 2012-2013, broken down by (i) each province and territory, (ii) each of the 61 designated communities, (iii) each funding program, including designated communities, rural and remote homelessness, Aboriginal homelessness, federal horizontal pilot project, homelessness knowledge development, and national homelessness information system?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 279—Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:

With regard to the Community Infrastructure Improvement Fund, for each fiscal year from 2006-2007 to 2013-2014: (a) what is the total amount of funding by (i) province, (ii) federal electoral district, (iii) agency; and (b) what agency was responsible for allocating this funding by (i) province, (ii) federal electoral district?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 280—Ms. Marjolaine Boutin-Sweet:

With regard to the Building Canada Fund, for each fiscal year from 2006-2007 to 2013-2014: (a) what is the total amount of funding by (i) province, (ii) federal electoral district, (iii) agency; and (b) what agency was responsible for allocating this funding by (i) province, (ii) federal electoral district?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 281—Mr. Romeo Saganash:

With regard to Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, specifically the Val d'Or regional office: (a) what are the existing standards and procedures to be followed by employees and directors of the regional office to respond to funding requests; (b) what changes have been made to the standards and procedures to be followed by employees and directors of the regional office to respond to funding requests in the past 10 years; (c) in which months of which years were the changes to the standards and procedures to be followed by employees and directors of the regional office to respond to funding requests implemented; (d) what are the existing standards and procedures to be followed by employees and directors of the regional office to respond to meeting requests from MPs' offices; (e) what changes have been made to the standards and procedures to be followed by employees and directors of the regional office to respond to meeting requests from MPs' offices in the past 10 years; (f) in which months of which years were the changes to the standards and procedures to be followed by employees and directors of the regional office to respond to meeting requests from MPs' offices implemented; (g) what is the complete list of meetings between MPs and employees and directors of the regional office in the past 10 years, broken down by year and political affiliation of MPs; (h) what is the complete list of meetings between representatives of MPs and employees and directors of the regional office in the past 10 years, broken down by year and political affiliation of MPs' representatives; (i) what is the complete list of meetings between former MPs and employees and directors of the regional office on a subject other than a former MP's business, in the past 10 years, broken down by year; (j) what are the existing standards and procedures to be followed by employees and directors of the regional office to respond to requests for information by phone from

MPs' offices; (k) what changes have been made to the standards and procedures to be followed by employees and directors of the regional office to respond to requests for information by phone from MPs' offices in the past 10 years; (l) in which month of which years were the changes to the standards and procedures to be followed by employees and directors of the regional office to respond to requests for information by phone from MPs' offices implemented; (m) what is the complete list of phone communications between MPs and employees and directors of the regional office in the past 10 years, broken down by year and political affiliation of MPs; (n) what is the complete list of phone communications between representatives of MPs and employees and directors of the regional office in the past 10 years, broken down by year and political affiliation of MPs' representatives; (o) what is the complete list of phone communications between former MPs and employees and directors of the regional office on a subject other than a former MP's business, in the past 10 years, broken down by year; (p) what are the existing standards and procedures to be followed by employees and directors of the regional office to respond to requests for information by email from MPs' offices; (q) what changes have been made to the standards and procedures to be followed by employees and directors of the regional office to respond to requests for information by email from MPs' offices in the past 10 years; (r) in which month of which years were the changes to the standards and procedures to be followed by employees and directors of the regional office to respond to requests for information by email from MPs' offices implemented; (s) what is the complete list of email communications between MPs and employees and directors of the regional office in the past 10 years, broken down by year and political affiliation of MPs; (t) what is the complete list of email communications between representatives of MPs and employees and directors of the regional office in the past 10 years, broken down by year and political affiliation of MPs' representatives; and (u) what is the complete list of email communications between former MPs and employees and directors of the regional office on a subject other than a former MP's business, in the past 10 years, broken down by year?

(Return tabled)

*Privilege***Question No. 292—Mr. Jonathan Genest-Jourdain:**

With regard to Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions, specifically the Sept-Îles regional office: (a) what are the existing standards and procedures to be followed by employees and directors of the regional office to respond to funding requests; (b) what changes have been made to the standards and procedures to be followed by employees and directors of the regional office to respond to funding requests in the past 10 years; (c) in which months of which years were the changes to the standards and procedures to be followed by employees and directors of the regional office to respond to funding requests implemented; (d) what are the existing standards and procedures to be followed by employees and directors of the regional office to respond to meeting requests from MPs' offices; (e) what changes have been made to the standards and procedures to be followed by employees and directors of the regional office to respond to meeting requests from MPs' offices in the past 10 years; (f) in which months of which years were the changes to the standards and procedures to be followed by employees and directors of the regional office to respond to meeting requests from MPs' offices implemented; (g) what is the complete list of meetings between MPs and employees and directors of the regional office in the past 10 years, broken down by year and political affiliation of MPs; (h) what is the complete list of meetings between representatives of MPs and employees and directors of the regional office in the past 10 years, broken down by year and political affiliation of MPs' representatives; (i) what is the complete list of meetings between former MPs and employees and directors of the regional office on a subject other than a former MP's business, in the past 10 years, broken down by year; (j) what are the existing standards and procedures to be followed by employees and directors of the regional office to respond to requests for information by phone from MPs' offices; (k) what changes have been made to the standards and procedures to be followed by employees and directors of the regional office to respond to requests for information by phone from MPs' offices in the past 10 years; (l) in which month of which years were the changes to the standards and procedures to be followed by employees and directors of the regional office to respond to requests for information by phone from MPs' offices implemented; (m) what is the complete list of phone communications between MPs and employees and directors of the regional office in the past 10 years, broken down by year and political affiliation of MPs; (n) what is the complete list of phone communications between representatives of MPs and employees and directors of the regional office in the past 10 years, broken down by year and political affiliation of MPs' representatives; (o) what is the complete list of phone communications between former MPs and employees and directors of the regional office on a subject other than a former MP's business, in the past 10 years, broken down by year; (p) what are the existing standards and procedures to be followed by employees and directors of the regional office to respond to requests for information by email from MPs' offices; (q) what changes have been made to the standards and procedures to be followed by employees and directors of the regional office to respond to requests for information by email from MPs' offices in the past 10 years; (r) in which month of which years were the changes to the standards and procedures to be followed by employees and directors of the regional office to respond to requests for information by email from MPs' offices implemented; (s) what is the complete list of email communications between MPs and employees and directors of the regional office in the past 10 years, broken down by year and political affiliation of MPs; (t) what is the complete list of email communications between representatives of MPs and employees and directors of the regional office in the past 10 years, broken down by year and political affiliation of MPs' representatives; and (u) what is the complete list of email communications between former MPs and employees and directors of the regional office on a subject other than a former MP's business, in the past 10 years, broken down by year?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 294—Mr. Marc-André Morin:

With regard to government funding allocated within the constituency of Laurentides—Labelle for each fiscal year from 2004-2005 to 2013-2014: (a) what is the total amount of funding by (i) department, (ii) agency, (iii) other government entity, (iv) program; and (b) how many jobs have been created as a direct result of this funding, including both (i) full-time jobs, (ii) part-time jobs?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 295—Mr. Sean Casey:

With regard to Section 33 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms: (a) what is the current policy of the government, particularly the Department of Justice, about the use or invocation of Section 33; and (b) since 2006, how many times has the government directed, suggested, contemplated or requested an analysis, examination or consideration from departmental officials within the Department of

Justice, the Privy Council Office, or any government department, about the possible use of Section 33?

(Return tabled)

Question No. 296—Mr. Charlie Angus:

With regard to the Indian Residential School Settlement Agreement and the associated Independent Assessment Process: (a) how much money did the government spend in total, to date, on the recent Ontario Superior Court case regarding the government's refusal to disclose police and court evidence of abuse at St. Anne's Residential School to the Independent Assessment Process, (i) how much money is the government projecting to spend, including court penalties, on this court case in the future, (ii) with regard to money spent on this court case, including court penalties, from what budget and what department is this money coming; and (b) for the Independent Assessment Process, for each year from 2006 to 2013, (i) what is the number of applicants, (ii) what is the number of settled cases, (iii) what is the average number of days taken to settle each case, (iv) what is the number of personnel adjudicating cases, (v) what is the average caseload per adjudicator?

(Return tabled)

[English]

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

The Speaker: Is that agreed?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

The Speaker: The Chair has notice of a question of privilege from the hon. member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, and I will hear her now.

* * *

[Translation]

PRIVILEGE

ADVERTISEMENTS BY THE MEMBER FOR WESTMOUNT—VILLE-MARIE

Ms. Isabelle Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I rise today to raise a question of privilege, pursuant to Standing Order 48. At the end of my speech, I would ask you to determine whether this constitutes a prima facie breach of my privileges as a member of Parliament.

This issue was recently brought to my attention, so I decided to raise it in the House today, at the earliest possible opportunity.

My question of privilege has to do with advertisements that the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie recently put in local newspapers to invite his constituents to come talk to him. These advertisements were clearly paid for out of the member's budget, which comes from the House of Commons, as evidenced by the House logo that appeared in the ads.

There is nothing unusual about inviting constituents to talk to their member of Parliament. In fact, these kinds of discussions are an essential part of the work that we do as MPs. I regularly host events to meet with the people of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine and talk to them about issues of concern to them, such as affordable housing.

The problem in this instance is that the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie's advertisement explicitly invites "...people in the riding of Westmount—Ville[-Marie], the borough of NDG and the city of Montreal West".

Mr. Speaker, the vast majority of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce and all of Montreal West are in my riding of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine. The member for Westmount—Ville-Marie's advertisement implies that he is the MP for the people of NDG and Montreal West, even though that is clearly my role. Why might the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie have done this? I will get to that in a few moments.

Mr. Speaker, I worry that by trying to falsely present himself as the member of Parliament for the people of NDG and Montreal West, the member is interfering with my work as a member of Parliament in my riding.

According to *House of Commons Procedure and Practice* by O'Brien and Bosc:

Speakers have consistently upheld the right of the House to the services of its Members free from intimidation, obstruction and interference.

It also states that even though it is impossible to codify all incidents which might be interpreted as interference, they must be considered by the Chair.

Mr. Speaker, there have been breaches of MPs' privileges in the past when people falsely claimed to be the MP of a riding when they were not.

For example, in 2004, a question of privilege was raised concerning a leaflet for a fundraiser. It contained an ad showing the former member for Beauharnois—Salaberry as the sitting member. The Chair found that there was a prima facie breach of privilege.

I realize that in the current case, the situation is not so cut and dry. The member for Westmount—Ville-Marie did not write in black and white that he was the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount. However, it seems clear to me that by deliberately and specifically mentioning the people of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce and Montreal West, he is trying to present himself as their MP and implicitly suggesting that they can turn to him when they have any concerns or need any help, instead of turning to me, their actual MP.

In 1985, during a similar issue, Speaker Bosley said:

It should go without saying that a Member of Parliament needs to perform his functions effectively and that anything tending to cause confusion as to a Member's identity creates the possibility of an impediment to the fulfilment of that Member's functions.

The fact is that the actions of the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie, in this particular case, could cause confusion, create an impediment to my work and harm my constituents. For example, imagine that a constituent from Notre-Dame-de-Grâce needed help from her MP on a citizenship matter. After seeing that ad, she might falsely believe that she must turn to the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie. She might go to his office and waste precious hours or days before being referred to her MP. I am very concerned about this situation, Mr. Speaker.

Privilege

I would like to come back to what motivated the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie. Why would he want the people of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce and Montreal West to believe he is their MP? Unfortunately, I think the answer to that question is rather obvious.

As you know, electoral boundaries were recently readjusted across the country to account for new demographic realities.

Accordingly, during the next general election in 2015, Notre-Dame-de-Grâce and Montreal West will be in the new riding of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount. These boroughs will henceforth be part of the riding for which the current member for Westmount—Ville-Marie will surely campaign to represent.

Mr. Speaker, it seems clear that with this deliberate reference to Notre-Dame-de-Grâce and Montreal West in his ad, the member for Westmount—Ville-Marie is trying to target future voters in the riding of Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount.

Working on community relations in one's own riding and outside of it is certainly part of a political representative's job. The problem here is that the member used his House of Commons' advertising budget, funded by taxpayers, to target future voters who are actually in my riding.

• (1525)

I am not an expert and it will be up to you, Mr. Speaker, to decide. However, it seems that using the House of Commons' resources for election purposes—this is definitely a case of preparing for the next election—is a breach of the rules of the House of Commons, which usually allow members to use their budgets to contact constituents in their own ridings.

I believe that there are grounds for raising a question of privilege and that the situation should be studied further in committee. However, should you decide otherwise, Mr. Speaker, I believe that all members would like a clarification of the rules on the use of members' budgets for the purpose of targeting future voters.

Mr. Speaker, if you find this to be a prima facie question of privilege, I am prepared to move the appropriate motion.

The Speaker: I thank the honourable member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine for raising this question.

Are there other members wishing to rise on this matter?

The hon. House Leader of the Official Opposition.

Mr. Peter Julian (Burnaby—New Westminster, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to add to the arguments presented by my colleague.

The advertisement clearly pertains to a neighbouring riding, but nowhere in the ad does it mention that this person, this member, does not represent the communities in question. I am talking, of course, about Montreal West and Notre-Dame-de-Grâce.

Business of Supply

Archived rulings include that rendered by Speaker Milliken on November 23, 2004. He had to rule on the same type of situation. At the time, the member for Montmorency-Charlevoix-Haute-Côte-Nord saw a misleading advertisement in his riding. The ad made it seem that a former MP was still a member of the House of Commons, even though he had been defeated in the previous election in June 2004. On November 23, 2004, Speaker Milliken ruled on the issue stating that the ad made it look as though the individual was a member of the House when in fact he no longer was. In that case, an individual was trying to attract people from a riding he no longer represented. The case before us is similar in that it infringes on the privileges of the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine.

I hope that you will rule on this matter, Mr. Speaker, and that you will share your ruling with us.

• (1530)

Hon. Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, we need to recognize that this is the first time we have heard these allegations and that we have had this type of discussion. Clearly, we feel very strongly about any issue involving compliance with the Canada Elections Act. This is also a very important issue for my colleague from Westmount—Ville-Marie.

At this time, he is unable to explain the context of this allegation, which we believe is completely unfounded. However, I would ask you, Mr. Speaker, to give my colleague from Westmount—Ville-Marie the opportunity to explain and reflect on the member's comments before you provide a definitive ruling on the issue. If necessary, we will explain exactly why our NDP colleagues' accusations are unfounded.

[English]

The Speaker: I look forward to further submissions on this question.

GOVERNMENT ORDERS

[English]

BUSINESS OF SUPPLY

OPPOSITION MOTION—PROPOSED CHANGES TO THE ELECTIONS ACT

The House resumed consideration of the motion.

Mr. Ted Opitz (Etobicoke Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am pleased to rise today on today's opposition day motion. The NDP is asking the House to consider several important aspects of the fair elections act. I welcome the opportunity to participate in this debate and to demonstrate how the fair elections act would strengthen our democracy. I will therefore be opposing the motion and encouraging other members to do the same.

In their motion before the House today, New Democrats ask that three elements of the fair elections act be amended through the end of vouching, the use of voter information cards in place of legitimate identification, and the refocusing of Elections Canada's education function.

I will address each of these provisions of the bill, but they do not exist in isolation. They are pieces of a broader piece of legislation that proposes comprehensive changes to the Canada Elections Act.

The fair elections act would ensure everyday citizens are in charge of democracy by putting special interests on the sidelines and rule breakers out of business. The bill would also make it harder to break elections laws. It would close loopholes to big money, impose new penalties on political impostors who make rogue calls, and empower law enforcement with sharper teeth, a longer reach, and a freer hand.

The fair elections act would protect voters from rogue calls with a mandatory public registry for mass calling, prison time for impersonating elections officials, and increased penalties. It would give more independence to the Commissioner of Elections Canada, allowing him or her control over staff and investigations, empowering that individual to seek tougher penalties for existing electoral offences, and providing more than a dozen new offences to combat big money, rogue calls, and fraudulent voting.

It would ban the use of loans to evade donation rules and would repeal the ban on premature transmission of election results, upholding free speech. It would provide better customer service to voters and would establish an extra day of polling.

In the case of disagreements over election expenses, it would allow MPs to present the disputed case to the courts and have judges quickly rule on it before the CEO would seek the MP's suspension. It would make the rules for fair elections clear, predictable, and easier to follow. Finally, the fair elections act would crack down on voter fraud by prohibiting vouching or voter information cards as acceptable forms of ID.

This last provision, cracking down on voter fraud by eliminating vouching, is an area of disagreement between the government and the NDP. I am not sure why, frankly, because each time someone votes fraudulently, that person cancels out the vote of an honest citizen. How many honest votes would the NDP accept being cancelled? In other words, what cancellation rate does it consider to be acceptable?

This is a vitally important question. It is not just good enough for legitimate voters to say, "As long as I can cast my ballot, why should I care if other illegitimate voters cast theirs?" The reason is that illegitimate votes cancel out legitimate ones. Every time a fraudulent vote is cast, a legitimate vote is not counted.

How seriously, then, should we take the issue of fraudulent voting?

Voter fraud is not a victimless crime. Its victims are legitimate voters who cast a ballot believing that they should have the same voice in the decision as their neighbour, but whose votes are stolen by voter fraud.

The NDP is fond of saying that there is no voter fraud. New Democrats say we have to prove it. They say we cannot point to anyone ever having voted fraudulently, but we have and I will.

The television show *Infoman* showed that two Montrealers were each able to vote twice. It demonstrated how easy it was to use voter information cards or identity fraud. The case is even documented on Elections Canada's own website, where the individuals in question had to sign compliance agreements.

Although no one condones these actions, the example is illustrative, and it shows just how easy voter fraud can be. The fair elections act would stop fraud of this kind by eliminating the use of inaccurate voter information cards as a replacement for acceptable forms of ID. The statistics on irregularities in the use of vouching and the high rates of inaccuracy in voter information cards are well established. I do not need to repeat them here.

I just want to remind honest, unsuspecting voters that their vote is denied every time a fraudulent vote is cast. In fact, there would be little difference between a fraudulent voter casting a ballot and a legitimate voter being turned away. Why will the NDP not take this threat seriously?

Voter fraud and developing ways to combat it are important, so I would like to focus the remainder of my remarks on another element of the NDP motion: Election Canada's education function.

• (1535)

Just over 20 years ago, in 1993, the Canada Elections Act was amended to give Elections Canada its current mandate to educate Canadians on democracy and to encourage voter participation. What was the budget for this mandate? It was limitless. You heard me, Mr. Speaker: Elections Canada was not given a specific budget for this activity. Instead, it was told to spend whatever it needed, drawing directly from the fiscal framework in order to educate Canadians about democracy, just as long as it reported back to the procedure and House affairs committee after the fact.

How has this approach, without a budgetary limit, been working? What results do we have to show for it? Surely voter turnout must have increased. Surely Canadians must have had an excellent grasp of the basics of voting, including what ID to bring.

Unfortunately, this has not been the case. Canadian voter turnout has plunged in the past two decades, and Canadians cite the lack of information as a reason for not voting.

In 1988, the last general election before Elections Canada had its current education mandate, voter turnout was 75%. In a previous election in 1984, voter turnout was also 75%. In fact, voter turnout in Canada dipped below 70% only twice between the end of World War II and the time when Elections Canada was given its current mandate to voter education. Voter turnout in the last general election was 61%. This is actually an increase of 3% over the previous election in 2008. If that is success, I would hate to see what failure looks like.

The opposition and Elections Canada often point to declining voter turnout around the world as a justification for continuing the current approach to voter education. Now let us examine the statistics a little more closely.

Business of Supply

I have just shown the record of declining voter turnout in Canada. Is it a similar story in presidential elections in the U.S.? The 2008 election that made Barack Obama president saw the highest voter participation since 1968. That is worth repeating. It was the highest voter turnout in 2008 in the U.S. since 1968, but in Canada, it was the lowest in our history. That hardly proves that declining voter turnout is a global phenomenon.

Some might suggest that the election was unique and historic, given that it was the first time an African American was a nominee for a major party. If that is the only reason, then what explains the fact that voter turnout in the next presidential election, in 2012, was actually higher than in the election in 2008?

Again, voter turnout in the last two presidential elections in the United States was the highest that it has been since 1968. Not only does this not support the suggestion that decline in voter turnout is a global phenomenon, it absolutely disproves it. Voter turnout in Canada has declined since Elections Canada began its current approach to voter education. The facts prove that.

After the last election, young non-voters reported that not knowing where, at 25%, when, at 26%, or how, at 19%, to vote played a role in their decision not to vote. Half of Canada's youth and three-quarters of aboriginal youth were unaware that they can vote early if they are not available on election day. The same report states:

The most important access barrier

—to youth voting—

was lack of knowledge about the electoral process, including not knowing about different ways to vote...

This is a result of Elections Canada's current approach to voter education: spend, spend, spend, and hope there will be something to show for it. It has not worked.

Young people are not the only ones confused by Elections Canada's ID requirements. In fact, I would like to quote a press release from the member for Saanich—Gulf Islands. This press release, incidentally, is still on her party's website. In it, the leader of the Green Party states:

To improve voter turnout, we should repeal all the changes, including the photo ID requirement, that make it harder for young people, First Nations, the poor, and seniors to vote.

Business of Supply

That sounds a lot like the motion we are debating today. There is just one problem: no photo ID requirement exists in the current Elections Canada Act, and the fair elections act does not propose it.

Have members heard a media outcry demanding the leader of the Green Party retract this factually inaccurate information? Have they heard the opposition demand that the record be corrected? Of course not, because it plays into a deliberately misleading narrative that critics of the bill are seeking to advance.

● (1540)

Today voters have 39 forms of authorized ID to choose from to prove identity and residence, and government-issued ID, photo or otherwise, is not required. The fair elections act would not change that in any way.

In fact, it is understandable that Canadians are confused about what forms of ID are acceptable in order to vote. After all, if an elected member in this House and the leader of a national party do not know which forms of ID are required and which are not, then how would we expect Canadians to know?

The fair elections act would respond to this by requiring the Chief Electoral Officer to communicate to Canadians the forms of ID that are acceptable in order to vote. That is a change we are proposing to the education function. It is a return to the basics.

If Canadians knew that they could vote using a bank statement and a student card, would they be concerned about the end of vouching?

In my time in the military, one thing we always returned to in training was the fundamentals. The fundamentals absolutely work, and this is something we should absolutely focus on here.

If Canadians knew that they could vote at a long-term care facility using a health card and an attestation of residence, would they be concerned about the end of vouching? I do not think so.

Education is essential, but Elections Canada has not met the grade. It is time that the current approach to education be replaced by a return to the basics.

In conclusion, Canadians must have confidence in the democratic process. Not only do they need to know how to cast a ballot, but Canadians also want to be sure that legitimate votes are not cancelled by illegitimate ones. As I demonstrated today, the fair elections act would go a long way to ensuring that Canadians would have the confidence in the electoral process that they want and deserve.

With the measures to eliminate vouching and communicate the many types of voter identification that are acceptable at the polls, I believe that the risk of voter fraud would be greatly reduced. Together, all of these initiatives would advance the voter identification process significantly from what it was a decade ago.

It is for that reason that I will not be supporting the motion, and, once again, I call upon all members to oppose the motion.

● (1545)

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments made by my Toronto neighbour, but once again the government has focused, apparently, on something about

fraud. He, above all, should know that fraud was not an issue. He was the one person whose election results were threatened by the notion that there were some discrepancies in the voting that took place in Etobicoke Centre in 2011, where there was only a 26-vote difference between the winner and the loser. That was where we discovered that the training for the elections officers was not sufficient to allow them to maintain the data properly. However, I would remind the member, and maybe he would comment, that there were zero cases of fraud in both of the court cases involving his election.

Would he like to comment on how many cases of fraud the government can actually bring forward?

Mr. Ted Opitz: Mr. Speaker, the member rightly points out the issues that occurred in my riding. The Supreme Court upheld the results four to three, and I remain in my seat.

My riding is not all of Canada. Right now, there are 307 other ridings aside from my own. As I pointed out in my speech, there are already incidents captured on TV of individuals in Montreal, and Elections Canada has a compliance agreement in force with those particular individuals. There will be other statistics, but those are the two that I used today to highlight the fact that this is an incident that does happen across Canada.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, the member suggested that we go back to the fundamentals of Bill C-23. The government likes to call it the fair elections act. Nothing could be further from reality. For all intents and purposes, it is a Conservative elections act, and I do not say that lightly, in the sense that we have received very little. The only support I have detected for this legislation comes from the Prime Minister's Office and members of the Conservative Party. There is no other political entity in Canada that I am aware of that endorses this legislation. Elections Canada has very real problems with this legislation. It is weakening our elections laws. There was no consultation done. This deals with a fundamental pillar of our democracy and the government is forcing this legislation through using its majority.

Does the member not see the irony of a majority Conservative government forcing through changes to elections laws, given the many other events taking place around the world, especially when academics and others around the world are saying that what the government is doing with the elections laws is wrong? Why does he not recognize that what is happening to the fundamental principle of democracy with this piece of legislation is wrong?

Mr. Ted Opitz: Mr. Speaker, I could not disagree with my hon. friend more. This government has an obligation to all Canadians to ensure that elections across this land are fair and free, and that those who violate the principles and laws of our Elections Act are punished to the full extent of the law. It is important to do that.

We have looked around the world at what has occurred in other places and have taken those lessons into account. This government has shown tremendous wisdom. The minister is a considerate and thoughtful minister who has put a great deal of time and effort into looking into all of aspects of this.

Business of Supply

The fundamentals and the basics are important. Dealing with the fundamentals of voting, of educating voters with respect to where to go, how to vote, when to vote, what their abilities and options are when voting, is what will allow a higher voter turnout in Canada. It will allow all members, especially our youth, to understand that they have a role and a responsibility. With citizenship go responsibilities. One of those is to vote. That is a basic fundamental that we need to communicate to all Canadians. This government is doing that in a comprehensive way that will reach all citizens of Canada. This will be implemented in the next general election, which will allow for a far better election.

• (1550)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my colleague gave the example of the voter turnout for the 2008 presidential election in the U.S. People might say that it is absolutely crazy to compare the Canadian system with the American system because they are quite different.

For example, the way voters register is not the same. Under the American system, political party volunteers participate in the voter registration process. That is not something Canadians want. They do not want the parties to be the ones to determine how easy it is for people to vote. That is one of the problems with the bill.

Take the example concerning young people. Everyone keeps quoting *Infoman*. We all saw the news report, but when it comes to reasons for changing fundamental aspects of democracy, there needs to be more to it than a single report. We need to do research and find other examples. It is important to see that report, but does my colleague have other examples? Speech after speech, we keep hearing about this one and only report. Does my colleague have any other supporting examples or statistics for us?

A news report from a half-hour show that is on once a week is not enough reason to make such significant changes to our democracy. What is more, we are not the only ones to say so. The Chief Electoral Officer and all of civil society say so.

What does the member have to say to that?

[*English*]

Mr. Ted Opitz: Mr. Speaker, I thank the hon. member for the question, but an honest comparison between our and the American systems clearly shows there are vast differences in the way we both conduct elections. The point in my speech was to mention the simple turnout in those elections, which is something comparable in both of our nations.

We did cite this particular example, but there are all kinds of data for all kinds of other things on this. I would encourage the hon. member to occasionally sit at our committee meetings if he would like, and he would hear some of those things being debated back and forth.

As I said, this government has an obligation to all Canadians to ensure that they understand how their system of democracy works; how they can contribute to it; how they can come out to vote, where, how, and when, and the options available. It is our responsibility to make sure that they do that. Through this proposed act and the minister's good work, we are going to make sure that all Canadians

have a better understanding of their democracy and how to participate in it in the next general election.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, does the member believe that it is good policy to pass election laws without the support of any opposition party or Elections Canada? Is that good policy?

Mr. Ted Opitz: Mr. Speaker, good policy is that all Canadians understand their democratic system. Good policy is that they understand where to vote, how to vote, and be able to participate fully in that process with the full confidence of knowing that their electoral system and their nation are based on the fundamental principles of freedom, democracy, human rights, and the rule of law, which their vote helps contribute to. I am disappointed that my hon. friends opposite cannot see that.

• (1555)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé (Chambly—Borduas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, before I begin, I must say that I will be sharing my time with my hon. colleague from York South—Weston.

I am pleased to be here today, although it is always strange to say such things, since we would have liked to avoid this kind of issue. We did not want it to come to this.

I am also pleased to rise to speak to this matter in the context of the opposition motion moved by my colleague from Toronto—Danforth. The motion calls on the government to remove all the problematic aspects of its bill on electoral reform, or as we like to call it, electoral deform.

We are just coming back from a two-week parliamentary break, and we have all had the chance to be in our constituencies. What is interesting about this issue is that when it comes to issues of procedure and elections, it often seems that people believe that this happens in the Ottawa bubble.

My constituents in Chambly—Borduas are very interested in this matter. For instance, I met with members of the Forum jeunesse Montérégie Est. They came to my office to talk about this issue and their concerns regarding the impact these changes will have on young people.

My colleague's motion has two key elements that will have an impact on young people. The first element has to do with identifying voters, and the second, voter education.

Before I begin, I would like to revisit what we have seen so far in this debate in the House of Commons. Let us talk about *Infoman*. Two weeks ago, the Minister of State for Democratic Reform gave an interview on an episode of that program. He then said that the NDP members were the big, bad guys, because they did not respect the *Infoman* news story. However, that is not at all true. Like everyone else, we saw what happened. Yes, it is troublesome to know that such a thing can happen.

Business of Supply

Any time changes of this magnitude are made to our democracy, we must go even further with our research. Having a starting point is all well and good; however, if that is the only example they have, that is very troubling. The member who spoke before me even said that other examples and other statistics exist, but he could not quote them because he did not have them in front of him. He invited me to attend their committee meetings. I have already done that.

My colleagues have asked about this repeatedly, and they have yet to get a response. The leader of the official opposition asked both the Prime Minister and the Minister of State for Democratic Reform and never got an answer. We are told that there are cases; however, no one can cite them. It is very difficult for those of us on this side of the House to take this seriously when we are not seeing much proof of the scope of the issue. We are having a hard time understanding the government's decisions.

We have seen the changes that will be made in terms of voter identification. It is very disturbing. Once again, the member who spoke before me talked a lot about the Americans. In my opinion, that is a questionable comparison given the differences between our two systems.

However, let us continue with that comparison and look at what happened during the last election with all of the issues surrounding voter identification. We saw that the party in power tried to change identification requirements for its own benefit and the benefit of its supporters.

We know full well that, as a group, young people do not support this government's actions. It is understandable that this electoral reform bill worries people, because it makes life more difficult for young people who want to vote.

The minister often responded to my colleague from Louis-Saint-Laurent, who asked questions about what ID students would need to vote, by saying that it would be fine, they just need a piece of ID with an address.

In reality, when someone goes to university or CEGEP, there are very few ID cards that include an address. I went to CEGEP and university and I did not have an address on my student cards. If people do not have a student card with an address on it or a driver's licence, then they have no identification that includes their address.

Youth are often a target because they do not have a driver's licence or another piece of ID with an address. Other groups are affected as well, including seniors and aboriginal Canadians.

● (1600)

I would like to focus on the impact on young people, a group of voters that the Conservatives would rather push aside.

The timing is interesting. On the weekend, Nik Nanos and Kevin Page—the former parliamentary budget officer who, in turn, was also pushed aside because, as part of his job, he criticized some of the government's measures—released a study showing how the federal political landscape would change if more young people voted. This is definitely worth mentioning because young people do not have the same priorities as the government.

For example, this government does not care about environmental concerns, such as climate change. Nor does it care about youth unemployment. I have worked very hard on that issue together with my colleague from Parkdale—High Park, when she was on the finance committee, and with my colleague from Skeena—Bulkley Valley, who is on the committee now. I should actually say that I am working with all of my NDP colleagues.

These studies show that if more young people voted, the level of public support for the government would change dramatically. As politicians, we definitely share a responsibility to encourage young people to vote. However, we cannot do that by making changes that will make it harder for young people and students to vote. This is the opposite of what is happening all over the world, in Quebec, at the provincial level, across Canada and in other countries where students are being encouraged to vote. Other governments are trying to make that easier for them. This government wants to make their lives more difficult.

Students are young people who are often voting for the first time. That makes it even more important because this is their first experience. We know that good civic habits can be shaped during that first experience. That is why we really need to pay attention to this issue.

Beyond the issue of voter identification, the civic education of our young people is another important element. Elections Canada had a mandate to educate Canadians about the importance of voting, for example through advertising campaigns. The government wants to take this power away and argues that it is the responsibility of politicians and political parties.

That is very troubling because even if parties and politicians do have this responsibility, it is just as important for a non-partisan institution such as Elections Canada to also have that responsibility. It is all well and good to put all the power in the hands of political parties and to ask them to take on that responsibility, but we cannot expect them to reach everyone, because they have the bad habit of only targeting the people who vote for them.

That is why it is important for non-partisan people who hold important positions in civil society, such as the Chief Electoral Officer, to promote the importance of voting. That would no longer be the case if this “unfair” electoral reform were to become law.

With respect to the issue of education, the Conservative members and the minister himself often use the lower voter turnout as an argument against the opposition and as justification for taking away Elections Canada's power to promote the importance of voting. This is indicative of the government's cynicism. According to the government, since that did not work, the mandate should be taken away from Elections Canada.

To solve the problem of declining voter turnout, the NDP would do more, not less, which seems to be the government's approach. According to the government, if something is not working at Elections Canada it must be scrapped and something else must be done. The government should take a more proactive approach. It should consider whether Elections Canada could do more to show people how important it is to vote.

Business of Supply

•(1605)

Young people represent only one segment of the population that will be negatively affected by this unfair election reform. However, they are a very important segment. After all, young people are the future of our country. That is why I have risen. I want to speak out against these changes and try to make this government listen to reason. We will continue to fight this bill because democracy depends on it.

[*English*]

Hon. Pierre Poilievre (Minister of State (Democratic Reform), CPC): Mr. Speaker, earlier today I quoted the leader of the NDP. He said that the findings in the Neufeld report demonstrated serious risks to the integrity of our electoral system. He pointed out in the quote I cited during question period that if we do not know who is voting, how can we possibly guarantee the security of that vote. He was quite right, actually, at the time. The compliance review of Elections Canada showed that there were 45,000 cases where someone was vouched for but there was no record of the voucher and the voter. We cannot possibly enforce the law to ensure that nobody vouches or votes more than once if in 45,000 cases, we do not have any record of who the voucher or the voter was.

Does the NDP member agree with his leader's assessment from last spring when he said that the irregularities linked to vouching and other Elections Canada exception cases are a serious problem for our voting system?

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Speaker, I can start off by quoting the same Mr. Neufeld who did say that the minister seems to be taking selective quotes from the report. That is one important issue here.

We are talking about all of these irregularities. The first important thing to note is that irregularities are not fraud. It seems to change daily. The government is talking about fraudsters and we are talking about potential mistakes. The problem is that none of these cases is being put forward. The government is not telling us on what it is basing these decisions. Are we, as members of Parliament, supposed to take that on blind faith and accept these huge changes to our democracy? I do not think that is the case. If the government were more forthcoming with all of these mysterious cases and statistics, we would have a better idea and a more wholesome debate.

That being said, when it comes to the comments of the leader of the official opposition, it is fair to say that all members of Parliament are always concerned with how elections take place. What we are seeing is a sledgehammer being taken to Elections Canada to solve some issues, as serious as they may be. The fact of the matter is that these widespread changes that are even being denounced by the Chief Electoral Officer would clearly go too far when it comes to fixing a few mistakes that might exist in the system. That is what is at stake here.

If the government really wants to fix the problems, it should consult with all parties, as all developed democracies do. This is clearly the only place in the world where it seems that the government is going to use its majority to force through election reforms. If the government wants to do that, then it should be more forthcoming with that and bring more sensible, common-sense modifications to the laws we already have instead of changing them wholesale to suit its own needs.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I would like to pick up on the member's sledgehammer comment and the idea of vouching.

Thousands of Canadians participated in the last federal election because of vouching. I would like to give the House one of many examples that could be cited. There are many members in the House whose constituencies comprise smaller rural communities where everyone knows everyone. The government is now coming down harsh with its sledgehammer, implying that it was a bad thing that someone was vouched for in the last election. That, in fact, enabled thousands of people to vote.

Could the member comment on that?

•(1610)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Matthew Dubé: Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for his question. This issue is indeed very worrisome. It seems the government is accusing people who used this system of being fraudsters when that is not at all the case. The current legislation ensures that anyone vouching for another voter must provide an address. They must provide information. The minister is claiming that this was not done.

Instead of making all these changes, why does he not ensure that this system continues to be used? Clearly, this is a very legitimate way of voting. As my colleague mentioned, many people voted in this way. In my opinion, the government is heading down a very slippery slope if it starts implying that those who used the vouching system are fraudsters. That is not the case. I would even go so far as to say that the government's own electorate used this system.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

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 Thunder Bay—Superior North, The Economy; the hon. member for Saint-Jean, Veterans Affairs; the hon. member for York South—Weston, Canada Post.

The hon. member for York South—Weston.

[*English*]

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to talk about this unfair elections bill.

Our elections process is going backwards. For the first time in Canada's history, we are disenfranchising people who have been enfranchised in the past. At every other step of the way, whether it was allowing women or aboriginal people to vote, or providing mechanisms for persons with disabilities or for persons who had difficulty proving their identity, we have always moved forward.

We have always moved to enfranchise people, and the Conservative government is moving backwards for the first time in our history. I think it is shameful.

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Canadians expect us to fix some of the problems clearly identified by a number of events over the past, since the 2011 election, and even before that. Those events displayed to Canadians that there was a problem with voting: officials of Elections Canada were not following procedures appropriately; the lists are no good; the lists need to be improved; there is a considerably amount of potential cheating happening by political parties; and Canadians expect us to do something about it.

This bill does not do any of those three things. In fact, the bill makes cheating easier in some circumstances. It has absolutely no impact whatsoever on the list itself and on whether the list will in fact be improved—it will not. In terms of voting, all the bill does is disenfranchise a number of individuals who were able to vote before.

First, the minister and others keep talking about these 39 pieces of ID that Canadians can use. In fact, that is not true. None of them are in the bill. These pieces of ID are set by Elections Canada, with the exception that the bill says voters cannot use the voter information card. There are 38 pieces of ID. Those 38 include 25 pieces of ID that can prove who a person is. Then a person needs to find 1 of 13 pieces of ID to prove where he or she lives.

We are really looking at 13 pieces of ID. Those 13 are sometimes completely unavailable to some individuals. For example, a student living not in residence but at the home of another individual in another city wants to be able to prove that he or she lives there.

Those students do not receive a utility bill. They do not have a bank or credit card statement. They do not have vehicle ownership or insurance there. They do not have correspondence issued by a school, college, or university to that place because that is not their original residence. The correspondence would have gone to their other place. They do not have a statement of government benefits because they are not getting them. They do not have an attestation of residence on a first nations band or reserve. They do not have a government cheque or cheque stub. They do not have a pension plan statement of benefits.

They do not have a lease or a mortgage statement. They do not have income or property tax assessment notices because, again; it goes back to their original home. They do not have an insurance policy. They do not have a letter from a public curator, public guardian, or public trustee. They do not have a letter issued by a shelter, soup kitchen, a student residence, or a long-term care facility because they are not in any of those places.

Those students cannot prove their location. It is physically impossible. The government says there are 39 pieces of ID, but not for a student living not in residence and off-campus in another city. It is impossible for them to prove where they live. What are they to do?

In the days before this bill, these students could have been vouched for by someone who knew them, who did have the ability to prove where they live and who lived in the same riding. Now, that is absolutely being taken away from them. That is wrong.

I want to list three other cases of individuals in my riding who, in the last election, actually voted but who will not be able to vote in the next election because their ability to vouch is being taken away.

One of them was a senior citizen who had been living in the same place for the last 55 years, I think it was. For some reason, the voter information card did not arrive. We know what the reason for that was now: Elections Canada decided to change the postal code to the wrong one; another problem that needs fixing that is not being fixed by this bill.

That individual did not have anything to prove her location of residence. She had nothing, and she was terrified. I knocked at her door and reminded her to go vote. She said, “I cannot vote because I cannot prove where I live. I did not get a voter information card, which I would normally have used. I cannot do it now because I cannot prove where I live. I do not have my name on anything here.”

• (1615)

Her husband was standing next to her, and I told him that he could vouch for her. All he had to do was take her to the polling station, and with his ID he could vouch for her. They were overjoyed. However, that would be gone. The next time they would not be able to do that.

Another senior in my riding, who has lived in Canada for about 40 years, cannot get Ontario picture ID. She has been trying for two years. She cannot get it because she does not have the appropriate ID. She has a Canadian citizenship certificate, but it is not the card type; it is the big certificate type, which they will not accept in Ontario. She has a birth certificate, but it is from the wrong country, which they do not accept in Ontario. She has a passport. However, again, it is from the wrong country, which they do not accept in Ontario. She cannot get Ontario picture ID. She is in a position of not being able to use picture ID. She does not have the right kind of ID to vote in terms of proving where she lives. That is the nub of this problem, being able to prove where one lives.

She is now in the process of spending \$130, which she does not have because she is a senior, to buy herself a passport. That passport will give her the ability to go to the Ontario government to prove who she is so she can get an Ontario picture ID card. That will cost her another \$60. She is spending \$190 to get enough ID to vote next time.

Why is it that Canadians have to spend money to vote? That should not happen, but that is happening in her case. It is going to take months. If this happened during the writ period, she would never be able to do that.

Finally, we have a person on disability payments, whose door I knocked on in the last election. I told her that she just needed to show the cheque stub that comes from the Ontario disability system to prove where she lives. She had nothing else. Persons on disability in Ontario are very impoverished. She could not afford cable or a phone, and she had no hydro bill. She had nothing to prove where she lived. Therefore, I suggested that she use the cheque stub.

A stub from a government cheque is a legitimate way of proving one's address. The trouble is, the Ontario government does not put a name and address on the stub. It is only on the cheque itself, which had already been deposited. She had no way of proving her address. In her case, she managed to find somebody in the building who would vouch for her; otherwise, she would not have been able to vote.

Those are three examples.

There is also the issue that Canadians want us to deal with of potential cheating by political parties during an election. There have been a number of allegations, news stories, and various things about robocalls, which were delivered to people to fraudulently send them to the wrong polling station. There were a number of issues regarding overspending by political candidates. There were issues regarding overspending by political parties, particularly the in-and-out scandal of 2006.

However, none of those issues are being dealt with in this proposed legislation. There would not be a way for Elections Canada to investigate properly, to subpoena evidence, to compel testimony, or force a political party to actually disclose what it has done. In fact, the bill goes one step further. It would permit a political party, in the guise of campaign fundraising, to have no limits on what it spends on communications with constituents, or with all of Canada.

The minister can correct me if I am wrong, but I doubt very much that the Conservative Party would give out a list of who it has sent communications to if asked by Elections Canada. The Conservatives have not been very forthcoming to this point, and I doubt they would do that to prove that individuals they communicated with have donated money in the past five years. That is unlikely and not going to happen. They are going to send stuff out willy-nilly. That is what will happen.

We would have no limit to the amount of communications that the party can send out during an election writ period, even though right now there is a limit on the amount of money that can be spent during an election. That is a very damaging piece of this puzzle.

I appreciate the time to explain why Bill C-23 does not work, and I urge members opposite to rethink their position and defeat the bill. Take a kill-the-bill position, as we like to say it.

• (1620)

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, the more I listen to members opposite talk about vouching, the more I wonder. If it is such a good system and so reliable, should it not be expanded? Would the member opposite think that if I went to an airport, for example, with my boarding pass, but had forgotten my wallet, should the person travelling with me be able to simply vouch for my getting on an airplane? Would that be a satisfactory use of vouching? Does the member support expanding something like that?

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, the difference is that in the case of an airport there have been examples of fraud and terrorism that have taken place with the wrong people getting on planes, or by the airport itself not being secure enough. One only has to go back to 9/11, in 2001, to realize that the system of security is of vital importance to the safety of individuals. We have had examples.

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There are zero examples of voter fraud that the Conservatives can point to, or anybody can point to. The Conservatives are disenfranchising 120,000 people, and perhaps more, as a result of a story that was concocted about the wide range of voter fraud that might be happening. That is not a legitimate comparison.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, it is a rather bizarre comparison, airport security versus election voting, to say the very least.

My question goes to the member's comments with regard to the ability to compel. The primary purpose of election laws is to ensure there is a level playing field. With regard to those who get caught breaking the law, perhaps through an in-and-out scandal, campaign over-expenditures, cheating, Elections Canada should have the ability to ensure there is a prosecution in a timely fashion. One of the tools it asked for was the ability to compel, which many provincial jurisdictions already have in terms of their independent election authorities. Without that ability, it arguably weakens Canada's current election laws.

I wonder if the member might want to reinforce that elections laws should be based on a consensus, working with other stakeholders, including other opposition parties, to give strength to the laws. The current legislation would not do that.

Would the member like to comment with regard to the compelling of witnesses?

• (1625)

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, in fact there was an all-party agreement in the House that there should be strengthened authority for Elections Canada officials to compel witnesses, and that is not part of this bill. Why is it not part of this bill? It is because there are certain parties in the House who perhaps do not want to be caught out. We on this side of the House want every election to be conducted as honestly and transparently as possible. If that requires that people who cheat the system, or persons allied with the people who cheat the system, be compelled to give testimony, that is what should happen. It is not in this bill.

Mr. Jasbir Sandhu (Surrey North, NDP): Mr. Speaker, over the last number of years we have seen a declining percentage of Canadians voting. New Democrats would like to encourage more Canadians to vote, to participate in our democratic system. The Conservatives are hoping that only people who vote Conservative are able to vote in the next election. It is clear that the elimination of vouching and the voter identification card will disenfranchise many Canadians who may or may not vote for the Conservatives.

My question to my colleague is this. We have seen cuts to the programs that encourage Canadian voters. Why are the Conservatives doing this? Why are they not encouraging Canadians to vote instead of suppressing their votes?

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, the notion that we should stop voter education and voter encouragement is absolutely bizarre. The suggestion a little while ago by my friend from Etobicoke Centre was that it was because it did not work in the past. What? All of that information went for naught? I do not think so. I think the problem is that there was not enough of it. There was not enough voter information. There was not enough voter encouragement.

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Canadians have told me at the door that they become tired of politics. That is something we want to change. We would like to see Canadians become more engaged, more responsible, become better participants in our civil democracy. That is what needs to happen, and it is not going to happen if Canadians are going to be turned away at every opportunity by the current government.

Mr. Blake Richards (Wild Rose, CPC): Mr. Speaker, it is a pleasure to rise in the House today to express my views regarding the New Democratic Party's opposition day motion concerning various reforms the fair elections act would bring to voter identification procedures under the Canada Elections Act.

The motion before the House also deals with the effects of these important reforms for specific groups in Canadian society. My remarks today will focus on this dimension of the issue and will demonstrate why the fair elections act would have beneficial effects on the voting rights of the groups listed in the motion.

I welcome this debate today, because it gives me an opportunity not only to contribute my perspective on what the real impacts of the voter identification reforms and the fair election act would be for the groups specified in the motion before us today but also because it will be an opportunity to provide colleagues with some of my thoughts on the multiple and significant advantages the fair elections act would bring to Canada's electoral system. In particular, I would like to highlight the importance of upholding the integrity of our elections and of protecting Canadians' right to vote.

I would like to make it clear to the House from the outset, however, that I disagree with the motion put forward by the New Democratic Party today regarding the bill.

The motion would have the House pronounce an opinion against the needed reforms the fair election act would bring to the current voter identification procedures set out in the Canada Elections Act. Furthermore, the motion would have Canadians believe that the fair elections act would have negative effects on the voting rights of the groups specified in today's motion, but I am pleased to say that nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, the fair elections act would have just the opposite purpose, that of protecting all Canadians' electoral rights from the risks of fraudulent voting and high rates of administrative errors, factors that can undermine confidence in the integrity of elections.

I would like to begin my remarks today with a few preliminary observations regarding the important enhancements the fair elections act would bring to our electoral system. The fair elections act proposes comprehensive changes to the Canada Elections Act. It is unquestionably important legislation that will reinforce the integrity of Canada's elections and will revitalize our democracy.

An element of particular relevance in today's debate is that the fair elections act would provide better customer service for voters by focusing Elections Canada's advertising on the basics of voting: where and when and what identification to bring. This measure will benefit all Canadians, including by facilitating the voting processes for all the specific groups referenced in today's motion.

For example, Elections Canada concluded in its evaluation report on the 41st general election that a top priority to increase youth turnout would be, and I quote, "increasing awareness about when,

where and how to vote, by providing information in formats suitable for youth". The fair elections act would ensure that Elections Canada would focus its communications messages on this crucial information for our electors.

I would like to add that the act would also establish an extra day of advance polling. The proposed change would give Canadians access to four advance polling days: the 10th, 9th, 8th, and the 7th days before election day. This important measure would also benefit all Canadians, including, again, those specific groups in society that are the subject of our debate today.

This would be an appropriate point to note that among the most important initiatives included in the act are measures to combat voter fraud and increase the confidence of Canadians in the electoral process. I think all members can agree that the prevention of electoral fraud is a very worthwhile goal and that every fraudulent vote not only undermines confidence in our elections but also, in effect, cancels out the legitimate vote of a Canadian.

In light of the fact that the motion before the House today refers specifically to the prohibitions in the fair elections act on the use of the vouching procedure and the voter information cards as replacements for acceptable identification, I would at this point like to take a few additional minutes to outline for the House precisely why it is imperative that those practices be prohibited.

• (1630)

I will first provide a little background information to explain precisely how the use of the vouching mechanism and the voter information cards for identification purposes relate to the current voter identification procedures under the Canada Elections Act.

With the passage of Bill C-31 in 2007, a mechanism was introduced for verifying the identity of electors and their residence upon registration at the polls and for voting. This was a significant advancement that our government brought to voter identification for federal elections in Canada. It helped bring us closer to restoring the confidence of Canadians in the electoral process.

As a result of those legislative changes, an elector voting in a federal election at an ordinary polling station must prove his or her identity in one of three ways. The first is by presenting one piece of identification issued by a government that includes a photograph of the elector and his or her name and address. The second is by presenting two pieces of identification, each of which establishes the elector's name and one of which establishes the elector's address. The third is by taking an oath, if accompanied by another elector whose name appears on the list of electors and who, after providing the piece or pieces of identification referred to, vouches for the elector on an oath. That is what is known as the vouching process.

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There are certain safeguards in place that are intended to make the vouching process more reliable and accurate. For example, the voucher must have the required pieces of identification. He or she cannot previously have been vouched for. The voucher must reside in the same polling division as the elector. The voucher can only vouch for one elector; multiple vouching is prohibited. Most importantly, there is also supposed to be a record of who the voucher is and who he or she vouched for. This ought to create an effective deterrent to anybody who gives thought to vouching for an unqualified elector. However, in practice, those safeguards are undermined by the fact that there are high levels of irregularities being reported at the polls regarding the use of vouching.

Studies commissioned by Elections Canada demonstrate mass irregularities in the use of vouching. According to the Neufeld report relating to administrative deficiencies at the polls in the 2011 election, vouching procedures are complex, and there were irregularities in 42% of cases where vouching was used. The report indicates that even with increased quality assurance, the problem would not be remedied. The report found that in 38% of the cases where vouching was required, there was no record in the poll book that clearly indicated both who the voters and the vouchers were. This clearly does not mean that all of these cases were instances of voter fraud. However, it does mean that polling day irregularities by elections officers regularly undermine an essential safeguard in the vouching mechanism, which is to have a record of who vouched for whom.

While Elections Canada has estimated that as many as 120,000 voters chose to use the vouching procedure on election day, those voters could have proven their identity and their residence by other means. The fair elections act will require in law that Elections Canada communicate what forms of identification would be acceptable at polling locations. This important measure would provide voters with the basic information they need about what identification to bring to the polls before they go to the polls.

I would also add a few words about the measures in the fair elections act regarding voter information cards, which play an important role in informing Canadians about where and when they need to vote. It is important to recognize that voter information cards are not currently authorized forms of identification and cannot be used as proof of identification and residency. Since the voter identification requirements were established in 2007, we have had one general election when voter information cards were permitted to be used on an exceptional basis and one general election when they were not authorized forms of identification at all.

● (1635)

Potentially serious problems could arise if those cards were used as replacements for acceptable identification, since there is evidence that the use of voter information cards as identification presents the risk of voter fraud. For instance, studies commissioned by Elections Canada showed a one-in-six error rate on voter information cards. Such inaccuracies could allow those attempting to subvert election laws to use them to vote more than once or to vote in the wrong riding.

I would like to take a few moments to outline the current situation regarding the various forms of identification available to voters and

to address the question of whether the reforms in the fair elections act would have any effect on their availability. This will illustrate quite clearly that the important voter identification measures contained in the fair elections act would not in any way disenfranchise the groups mentioned in today's motion: first-time voters, such as young people and new Canadians; aboriginal Canadians; and seniors living in residences.

I would also like to emphasize that the flexibility of the Canada Elections Act would not change. Rather, the goal of the fair elections act is, as I mentioned earlier, to prohibit only those specific administrative procedures that are risky and counterproductive, in particular the use of vouching and voter information cards as replacements for acceptable identification. In this way, it would minimize the risks of fraud and error in the voting process.

Nevertheless, even with the new protections introduced by the fair elections act, voters would still be able to choose from among 39 forms of authorized identification to prove their identity and residence, including a lease, bank statements, library cards, hunting licenses, Canadian Forces identity cards, and many more. In fact, the current authorized list includes not only about two dozen different kinds of identity cards but also a wide variety of original documents that contain a name and an address.

I would like to emphasize that this latter point is of particular importance with respect to certain groups in society that for various reasons may face challenges in proving their identity and residence. I would like to take a moment to elaborate on this point.

The kinds of original documents with a name and address that are among the 39 forms of authorized identification include a statement of government benefits, which would be employment insurance, old age security, social assistance, disability support, or a child tax benefit. It is unquestionable that this option would facilitate the identification process, for example, for seniors who live in a residence. They would be able to use their old age security statements to provide identification at the polls.

Moreover, the list of original documents considered to be suitable identification for the purposes of voting would also include letters from a public curator, a public guardian, or a public trustee. It could be documentation, such as a letter of stay or an admission form, issued by the responsible authority of a shelter, a soup kitchen, a students residence, a seniors residence, or a long-term care facility.

Clearly the option of presenting a letter from the responsible authority of a student or seniors residence could be quite useful for seniors who live in a residence or for young first-time voters who may be students living away from home while they attend an educational institution. Students would also have the ability to use correspondence issued by a school, college, or university to provide their identification. All of this would be in addition to the fact that student identification cards and old age security cards are both authorized forms of identification.

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I have not yet mentioned the forms of authorized identification that would be of specific benefit to aboriginal Canadians. Specifically, the forms of identification authorized by the Chief Electoral Officer would include certificates of Indian status, also known as status cards. This is in addition to attestations of residence issued by the responsible authority of a first nations band or reserve.

• (1640)

I would also like to emphasize at this point that the Chief Electoral Officer would continue to authorize acceptable forms of identification at the polls. Furthermore, the Chief Electoral Officer would be encouraged to continue his efforts to ensure that the list of authorized identification contains documents to allow those with particular challenges in proving their identity and their residence to be able to do so. In fact, this is the central message of my remarks here today in the House.

The fair elections act would do nothing to detract from the flexibility and adaptability that is inherent in the current system of voter identification under the Canada Elections Act.

The government recognizes that these are key strengths of our electoral system, and as a consequence, the reforms in the fair elections act would serve to enhance those positive elements in the current system while minimizing the very real risks of electoral fraud.

With specific regard to new Canadians, those who are eligible electors would have been resident in Canada for some time prior to obtaining their citizenship and being able to vote in their first election, and so would not face greater challenges than any other Canadian in obtaining one or more of the 39 forms of authorized identification I have just talked about.

Additionally, I would like to note that Elections Canada has produced, in 27 languages in addition to English and French, a document concerning voter identification at the polls, which is intended to make this important information more easily accessible to voters from ethnocultural communities.

The fair elections act would do nothing to impede such important and fundamental advertising on the basics of voting: where, when, and what identification to bring. In fact, the fair elections act would ensure that Elections Canada focuses its advertising on this crucial information.

The reforms that the fair elections act would bring to the voter identification procedures under the Canada Elections Act are important and much needed measures that would help to ensure that our electoral system operates with the integrity that all Canadians expect and deserve.

In particular, the prohibitions in the fair elections act on vouching and the use of voter information cards as replacements for acceptable identification are designed to protect the vote of Canadians. This certainly includes the specific groups that are mentioned in today's motion: first time voters like youth and new Canadians, aboriginal Canadians, and seniors living in residences.

As I mentioned in my earlier remarks, the fair elections act actually has just the opposite purpose, that of protecting all Canadians' voting rights. With the fair elections act, our government

continues to respond to emerging challenges in order to ensure fair elections in which the voice of every voter is counted.

I will bring my remarks to a close today by reiterating my opposition to the motion that has been put forward by the New Democratic Party today concerning the important reforms the fair elections act would bring to Canada's voter identification procedures.

I certainly hope hon. members will join me in opposing this motion and supporting the important changes in the fair elections act.

• (1645)

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I want to make sure my colleague is fully aware that whenever the minister lists 39 original documents, the fact of the matter is that an individual needs to have two pieces of ID for the most part, and the biggest problem for many people in the country is showing their address. That is where the voter information card has been very useful, from Elections Canada's perspective.

I will read very briefly from a *Toronto Star* op-ed piece by Marjaleena Repo, on March 14, entitled "...government's Fair Elections Act: bad news for voters". She is a senior, and she gives a few examples of how people are not as lucky as she to be able to put together pieces of ID:

A few examples suffice: A utility bill is usually in one person's name, so others in the household cannot use that. People with pre-paid cellphones have no phone bills. Bank/credit card statements are available for those who have them; many Canadians do not have either. Correspondence issued by a school, college and university might not exist, and might not have a current address on it. Statement of government benefits applies only to those who have them. Attestation of Residence to be issued by First Nations to band members are not necessarily available, and on it goes, with the rest.

The fact of the matter is that only something like 13 documents have addresses, and only one or two have the potential to apply to many groups in society. That is why the voter information card has proven to be so useful, with absolutely no strong possibility of it being used for fraud because it is a second piece of ID. It cannot be used on its own.

I am wondering if my hon. colleague can acknowledge that it can only be used as a second piece of ID and that he and his party are overstating big-time the potential for fraud with using such cards.

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, there are a couple of reasons why the assertions the member made in coming to the question would be wrong. First, he indicated he feels the voter information cards should be used as identification and that would not create any errors or potential for fraud. Frankly, as I outlined in my speech, it is very clear there are errors in one in six of these voter information cards. Does he really believe there is not concern about the potential for that to be a problem, when one in six are incorrect or not factual?

Business of Supply

That is the first problem with what he said. The second problem is that, when there are 39 acceptable forms of identification, he has indicated that in most cases one would have to provide two. I would argue that in many cases, if one has government issued ID, which has a photo and a name and address, which many Canadians do in fact have, there would only be the need for one. However, there are cases where there is the need for two, and there are many acceptable forms of ID. I have talked about a few of them specific to the groups we talked about today. For example, students could use an attestation of residence that shows residence at the school. They could use a lease document that would indicate where they are living when they are at school. They could use their student information cards, library cards, and many things like that. I could go on and on with a number of acceptable forms of ID if the time were available. I just really believe that the hon. member should take another look at what he has asked.

● (1650)

Mr. Massimo Pacetti (Saint-Léonard—Saint-Michel, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I think we are all in agreement in the House today that we want to eliminate voter fraud. However, the reality is that there is less and less of a turnout. There are fewer people showing up. Therefore, should we not be encouraging and finding ways to have voters eligible to vote? The reality is that the voter cards are being used.

For example, in Quebec we have the medicare card. Most seniors have medicare cards. They do not have drivers licences. Medicare cards do not have ID on it. Therefore, could we not just find a way to perhaps have the medicare card with the voter ID be a way to help voters vote? We have to find a way to help voters vote.

There is no evidence that there has been fraud. The Chief Electoral Officer attested to that, so I am not sure where this is coming from. Some of these voters are actually Conservative voters. Anyone who has ever showed up at a resident home will see that the elderly do not walk around with ID on them. They show up because they have a voter ID card that reminds them that they actually have to vote.

Could the hon. member perhaps find better ways to help a better turnout rather than eliminating ways for people to vote?

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, I should re-emphasize for the member that, when we talk about the voter information cards, there are errors on one in six of these cards. There is clearly something that needs to be addressed here. What he needs to also be clear on is that there are 39 forms of acceptable identification. He did use specifically the example of seniors. That was what I would have liked to address had I had the chance earlier, so I will do that now.

He used the specific example of seniors. One example we can use is that one of the 39 forms of acceptable identification is a statement of government benefits. Therefore, in the case of a senior, old age security would be an example of that. In the case of a senior living in a seniors' residence or a long-term care facility, there are various forms such as attestation of residence, letter of standing, or admission form. These are all acceptable.

There are many examples of acceptable forms of identification. There are 39 pieces, in fact. I would argue that if one were to take a good look at the list—and I will not read them all now because time is short—it seems to me it would be quite clear that there are quite a

few options that are acceptable forms of identification, which I firmly believe would facilitate the ability of all Canadians to be able to vote and to vote knowing we have been able to ensure their vote is safe and there is not the ability for others to cancel their vote through voter fraud.

Mr. Earl Dreeshen (Red Deer, CPC): Mr. Speaker, when it comes to something like krafthockeyville.cbc.ca, we can vote for Sylvan Lake and we can vote early and we can vote often, but when it comes to a federal election, that is not the type of thing we do.

I want to relate an issue that actually happened to me. In 2008, when the voter identification cards came to our home, my wife had a card for one polling station and I had a card for a second polling station. It was my first election, so of course it was a situation where I wanted to talk to the electoral officers. I said this kind of issue is a bit of concern as to which side of the bed each of us was actually on.

However, the situation is that there are mistakes. In this case, it would have been a bit of an embarrassment for me if I had taken a camera crew to the wrong polling station when it came to my very first vote as a member of Parliament.

I would ask if the member would perhaps comment on that one in six issue, as far as those voter identification cards are concerned.

● (1655)

Mr. Blake Richards: Mr. Speaker, I noted his support for the town of Sylvan Lake in the Kraft Hockeyville contest. I am certainly very supportive. I know it has had some tragic issues with its arena, and I am certainly hopeful that people will vote early and often for them.

However, I agree with him that when it comes to something as important as our federal elections, we have to make sure we are doing all we can to ensure the vote is accurate, fair, and free from voter fraud. I think that is why he has highlighted that it is so important that we look at the voter information cards, as the opposition is calling for them to be used as an acceptable form of identification, and we know that there are errors on one in six. The member has outlined an example in his case. I have heard many other examples like that. One of my colleagues who sits on the procedure and House affairs committee that has examined this bill has indicated that in one election he received three different cards for himself, based upon variations of his middle name, first name, and combinations thereof. I have heard many other examples like that.

Obviously, there is a concern when we have one in six with the wrong information. That is a very high error rate, something we should all be concerned about.

I just reiterate one last time that there are 39 forms of acceptable identification that can be produced at the polls. What is also important is that we provide education through Elections Canada, which focuses on where and when to vote and what identification to bring to the polls to ensure that Canadians know before coming to the polls. I believe we would see fairer elections and better turnouts, as well.

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan (Scarborough—Rouge River, NDP): Mr. Speaker, at the outset I say that I will be sharing my time with the member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

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Bill C-23 has been criticized as undemocratic by academics, elections officials, and, more importantly, by many Canadian citizens. Just this morning, on my trip to Ottawa, I had a chance to read *The Globe and Mail*. It has been editorializing on Bill C-23 for over six days now, sharing more information on this unfair elections act than the government is with Canadians.

I thank *The Globe and Mail*. In today's piece, it decried the bill, saying to kill this bill for the good of the country. I could not agree more with what the *The Globe and Mail's* editorial said.

I would like to share some more of what I read today:

The government has touted the bill's changes to voting rules as needed to prevent voter fraud. That's a red herring. There is no evidence that vouching, a process the bill eliminates, led to widespread fraud. The government has resorted to defending itself with out of context citations from experts, whose conclusions are the opposite of what the government pretends. Tightening the rules will prevent many eligible Canadians from voting; those affected are mostly not Conservative voters.

Other changes create a giant, partisan loophole in campaign spending laws, to the advantage of the Conservatives. Why? The bill gives incumbent parties in each riding the power to name key election officials, instead of leaving the job to an impartial Elections Canada. Why? Bill C-23 also takes direct aim at Elections Canada in other ways – neutering its ability to conduct public outreach campaigns and encourage voting. Why? It also meddles with Elections Canada's ability to investigate wrongdoing or communicate the results of investigations. Why?

It is not just me or *The Globe and Mail*; many Canadians are asking the same questions. Why are the Conservatives trying to stop voters, stop Canadians, from actually participating in our general elections? Time and time again, experts have been saying that Bill C-23 aims to fix problems that are not really there.

The bill is actually exacerbating the real problem with Canada's electoral system, which is low voter engagement. Voter participation is low, and engaging new voters in a time when Canadians are cynical about government is an uphill battle. Why are the Conservatives trying to make voting harder, when we should be making it easier and as accessible as possible? The answer is simple, and very discouraging: it is because the unfair elections bill makes it easier for the Conservatives to win. They want to make it harder for people who do not vote Conservative to vote at all.

Hundreds of thousands of Canadians rely on vouching and voter identification cards to prove that they have the right to vote. This is especially true for young people, new Canadians, aboriginal people, and seniors living in residence. Bill C-23 would put an end to vouching practices. Vouching has long been an accepted practice; not everyone has the financial means to secure an ID, and not everyone in Canada is wealthy.

Aboriginal people, university students living away from home, the homeless, and seniors in residence are all groups that are less likely to have eligible ID or mail on hand, thus requiring someone to vouch for them. In the last election, approximately 100,000 people used vouching to exercise their right to vote.

In addition, voter cards will no longer be accepted to confirm identification. The use of voter ID cards, the notice of registration on the electoral list that is sent to voters, benefits those who face challenges in establishing their address when it is time to vote. Examples are youth on campus, seniors, and aboriginal people. Many aboriginal people wait months to get their treaty cards. They may not have access to alternative forms of ID. Elderly couples may

need to have a spouse vouch for them, because only one of their names was on the registered mail.

The rate of error is very small when using voter ID cards, and the allowance worked to enfranchise many, so why get rid of it? The only reason I can see is to disenfranchise voters.

My riding of Scarborough—Rouge River is large and diverse. We have a high population of new Canadians who may face some difficulties when they go to the polls next election. For some, the 2015 election will be their first opportunity to vote federally. What a warm welcome to their new home to be told they cannot vote.

● (1700)

We also have the highest youth-to-population ratio in the greater Toronto area in Scarborough—Rouge River. There are approximately 32,000 people between the ages of 18 and 34. The national youth survey conducted by Elections Canada after the 2011 election found that among Canadians aged 18 to 34 who did not vote, 15% said that their decision was influenced by their inability to provide proof of identification, while another 16% indicated that they were influenced by their inability to provide proof of address.

However, members need not take my word for it. Although the Conservatives did not feel the need to consult the Chief Electoral Officer, Marc Mayrand, he had more than enough to say about vouching in testimony that he provided at the procedure and House affairs committee that we know the Conservatives wish they could forget. Luckily for us and for all of Canada, it is on the public record.

The Chief Electoral Officer, when he spoke at the committee, had this to say on vouching:

It has been pointed out that vouching is a complex procedure and that numerous procedural irregularities were found to have been committed at the last general election in connection with vouching. It is critical to understand that, as recognized by the Supreme Court of Canada, the vast majority of these were strictly record-keeping errors by poll workers documenting the vouching process, and not fraud or even irregularities that could compromise an election. There is no evidence tying these errors to ineligible electors being allowed to vote.

That is a fairly clear demonstration that vouching is not leading to election fraud.

When asked publicly about why they would ban vouching and the use of voter information cards, Conservatives say that it is because they are trying to cut down on fraud. However, that does not make sense. We know they are not cracking down on fraud. Elections Canada has been clear that there is no evidence to suggest that vouching or the use of voter information cards has actually led to fraud. There is no evidence to suggest vouching or voter information cards are connected to electoral fraud. There is no evidence to show that this legislation would be justified in ending vouching and ending the use of voter information cards.

The only example of voter fraud using voter ID cards that the Conservatives could give us was, of course, the statement by the member for Mississauga—Streetsville that he had witnessed with his own two eyes that voter fraud was happening using voter ID cards. Of course, as the House knows now, this was not the case, which invites the question of why the member for Mississauga—Streetsville brought it up if he knew it was not true.

Unfortunately, this unfair elections act is not just an attack on voter access but also on education. Bill C-23 would strip the Chief Electoral Officer's power to engage in public education. Under the unfair elections act, the Chief Electoral Officer would be limited to discussing only certain aspects of the electoral process: when, where, and how to vote. That is literally the least amount of information that the Chief Electoral Officer and Elections Canada could give to Canadians. That is all they would be allowed to say. This is absolutely not a way to increase voter participation. This is very much a departure from many western democracies.

Traditionally, bodies that oversee elections have the mandate to educate the public on how to vote. If Elections Canada is not allowed to do the job, then who will? The Conservatives are counting on the probability that nobody will. The Conservatives would rather change the rules of the game than play by the rules. We know that with their majority government, the Conservatives have been writing their own rules, making them up as they go along.

Unfortunately, the Conservatives have a track record of breaking election laws with their in-and-out scheme, robocalls designed to suppress opposition votes, and rule-breaking overspending by Conservatives ministers, not to mention charges against the Prime Minister's former ethics spokesperson, the MP for Peterborough.

The Conservatives had a chance with Bill C-23 to do the right thing and introduce a bill to crack down on real electoral fraud, but they could not stop themselves from tacking on cynical measures designed to tilt the playing field in their favour and make it harder for some groups of Canadians to vote. As I said before, those include young people, seniors, aboriginal people, and homeless people.

I want to say one last thing. As *The Globe and Mail's* editorial said this morning, for the good of this country, let us kill this bill.

• (1705)

[Translation]

Mr. Guy Caron (Rimouski-Neigette—Témiscouata—Les Basques, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was very pleased to listen to my colleague's speech. With regard to people having their identity confirmed by a peer, situations like those my colleague described often occur. These are situations where the person does not have any

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ID and where members of certain very specific groups have a great deal of difficulty obtaining identification or are less likely to have identification with them. However, the facts have been misinterpreted in such a way that many people think that just anyone can confirm an individual's identity and that the process is very easy.

I would therefore like to hear what my colleague has to say about how complex it is to vouch for someone who does not have a piece of ID with them.

[English]

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Mr. Speaker, as I mentioned, in many situations people have difficulty getting their hands on ID. Young people who will be voting for the first time may not have driver's licences, other identification, or utility bills in their names because they live with their parents. They may not have any form of identification and may need their parents to vouch for them, saying, "This is my child, who is 18 years old and a Canadian citizen, and who should be able to vote because they live with me in my home." Seniors living in residences traditionally do not have identification cards, driver's licences, or some sort of ID with an address on it. Aboriginal people wait weeks or months for their treaty cards to arrive.

On the topic of young people, 15% said they could not provide proof of ID and 16% said they could not provide proof of address. These barriers to voting for young people are particularly pronounced among aboriginal youth, 20% of whom said that they could not vote because they did not have ID and 23% of whom said they lacked proof of address. Of youth with disabilities, 28% could not vote because of lack of ID and 33% could not vote because they lacked proof of address. Finally, of unemployed youth, 21% could not vote because of lack of ID and 22% could not vote because they lacked proof of address.

We know that under the Conservative government, the number of young people who are unemployed or underemployed is continuously rising. If 21% and 22% of young unemployed people cannot vote, that is a significant portion of our population that the Conservatives are making sure are not participating, not voting, and not exercising their franchise, a franchise that so many people who came before us made sure to fight for so that we could vote.

• (1710)

[Translation]

Mrs. Anne-Marie Day (Charlesbourg—Haute-Saint-Charles, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I am rising because I would like to speak to the member and congratulate her on her excellent speech about something that I witnessed not too long ago.

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The incident in question involved seniors living in a residence where there was a polling station. They went to that polling station. In Quebec, health cards do not have an address or photograph on them. A gentleman came to the polling station with his health card. He did not have a driver's licence; he was living in a senior's residence and his licence had been taken away. That was the case for a number of people living in the residence where I was observing the proceedings. He was unable to vote. He was sent to get the documents on the list. He came back but the document he had was not accepted. He returned a second time and said that he would not come back again and that his decision was final.

Voter turnout is already very low. The government is going to require more from people when voter identification cards make things so simple. Voters are used to them. Voter cards were sent to people based on census data. People were identified and received their card. There is perhaps a certain margin of error—there always is—but voters were used to this process and were used to going to the polling station with the card, which was valid and accepted. Right now, there is confusion at the polling stations as to who will be allowed to vote and who will not, and the government is not giving polling station workers additional training.

Does the member believe that even fewer people will turn out to vote in the next election?

[*English*]

Ms. Rathika Sitsabaiesan: Absolutely, Mr. Speaker. There will be far more Canadians who will be disenfranchised from voting.

We are in a situation in this country where voter turnout continues to decrease. My constituency had the second-lowest voter turnout in the 2008 election. As a result of local community members taking it upon themselves to create voter education campaigns between the 2008 election and the 2011 election, voter turnout increased by 18% in Scarborough—Rouge River. Local community members educated the people. Elections Canada had the opportunity to educate Canadians and ensure that young people were enumerated. It had the opportunity to make sure that new Canadians knew how to vote and when to vote. Because of that, voter turnout increased by 18% in one federal election.

That is the type of thing that should be happening across this country. It is an absolute shame that less than 60% of Canadians are voting. More Canadians need to make sure their voices are heard. Their voice is their vote, and Canadians need to be using it.

Ms. Linda Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona, NDP): Mr. Speaker, this motion is all about the struggle for the vote.

I think it is important for this place to be reminded that it was not until 1918 that women could finally vote in a federal election. I would like to credit Alberta's own Nellie McClung for her strong efforts across the country to ensure that women could exercise their suffrage at the provincial, local, and federal level.

It was not until 1960 that Canada's first nation peoples were allowed to vote with no strings attached and without giving up their aboriginal rights.

However, as many in this place have mentioned, there has been broad concern across Canada over the decrease in voter turnout. Therefore, the last thing we would expect the government of the day

to do is to put measures in place that would put further barriers in place, making it difficult for people to exercise their franchise.

An open, fair, and inclusive electoral system is the foundation of a modern democracy. The right to vote is now enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which is not a minor matter. Jean-Pierre Kingsley has been quoted as saying, "Canada's electoral system is often mentioned as an international model for both its fairness and effectiveness".

Because of our reputation for having a credible electoral system, Canadians have been invited to serve as election monitors in elections around the world, recently, in Ukraine. I had the privilege, in 2012, of attending in Ukraine to help monitor its election. Other members attended again last December, and we are going to be welcoming those invitations again.

I had the privilege in the last week to travel with colleagues from this place to two African countries, Mozambique and Madagascar. These are lesser developed nations that have gone through war and suffered extreme poverty. Yet, they have established electoral commissions and are bending over backwards to educate the populace and get them enumerated to enable them to vote. However, here we are moving in reverse.

We should perhaps be shamefaced going overseas, professing to have expertise in the democratic electoral process, when the current Conservative government is moving to a more regressive version. We might have to have election monitors here, to engage and encourage us on how we can make our process more democratic.

Today we have a motion put forward by the member for Toronto—Danforth, which says, in part:

That, in the opinion of the House, proposed changes to the Elections Act that would prohibit vouching, voter education programming by Elections Canada, and the use of voter cards as identification...

The concern is that first-time voters would be disenfranchised, including youth and new Canadians, aboriginal Canadians, and our seniors living in residence.

I wish to speak to the process deployed in the passage of these proposed election laws.

Reforms have been long awaited. Many times, the ministers of the government of the time stood in their places and said that any day they were going to table an election law, but then they would withdraw it. We have been waiting for quite some time. Everyone agrees in this place that we do need some reform to the law going forward to the next election, which will be within a year or year and a half. It is important that we have enough time to get these laws in place and that Elections Canada be ready for them.

The question is, why now the rush, having waited so long to bring forward changes?

The Conservatives have brought the bill forward with no consultation with Elections Canada, which is in breach of past protocols. It is also a breach of the past protocol to not consult all the parties. Again, in my visit to these developing African nations, those governments have reached out to their opposition members. What kind of example is the Conservative government setting? Why the need to fast-track Bill C-23?

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A reasonable request was made to have the bill immediately go to committee so that more substantial amendments could be made. We had the public calling for more time to consult, and there have been calls by our party to take this bill across Canada to hear from Canadians, all of which has been denied.

Despite the significant issues identified, we are rushing the bill through. We plea once again with the government to apply some common sense, dignity, and democratic process to the reform of the most critical law in our nation, the right to exercise one's franchise.

• (1715)

I would like to speak to a couple of issues under the bill that are raised in the motion. One issue is the proposed prohibition of vouching and any reliance on voter ID cards.

As has been mentioned by many of my colleagues, in the past there has been some level of reliance on vouching. Why is that? It is because there are some members of our society who simply do not have readily available identification. In my riding of Edmonton—Strathcona, within the city of Edmonton and province of Alberta, it is well known across the country and by the government of the day who brag regularly about the work that has been created in Alberta. It suggests that people should move to Alberta. There are jobs, and it welcomes people from other countries to work in Alberta, in many cases in the oil sands.

As a result, we have an incredibly mobile population. In going door to door in three successive elections, I can attest to the fact that many people had just moved in. They had moved across the city, relocated, had no mail with their address, no licence with their new address, and so on. At household after household, we were giving out information on how people could be enumerated. It would be a very serious problem if we took away the voter ID cards, and particularly if we also took away the vouching.

I can also attest to the serious concerns expressed by university students in my riding. I am privileged to have three university campuses in my riding, and there is an additional campus across the river in another riding. I have received letters, from the students' unions from MacEwan University, University of Alberta, and King's University. Those students' unions were all voicing deep concern about the removal of the opportunity for vouching. Why? In many circumstances, as many have attested, students share a residence and only one name will be on the lease or on the bills that come to the house. They have no way of proving their place of residence.

I can attest that I personally have seen young students coming to vote in my riding who have been turned away. Parents have arrived with them, and they are still turned away. In other cases, students have been misinformed and told they must vote in the town they come from, that they cannot vote where they go to university. We need to move in the direction of enabling our youth to vote, not discouraging them.

Second is the category of first nation peoples. In my city, there are many first nation people who, sadly, are displaced, homeless, even though the city is trying to address that. There are wonderful services, including the Boyle Street society, which at the time of an election come forward to assist homeless people. They vouch for them to enable them to vote. They have personally expressed deep

sadness to me, that by banning vouching for the people who are trying to exercise their rights, they are going to be banned from that opportunity.

Additionally, as I am sure is the case for all members of this place, there are many seniors residences and long-term care institutions in my riding. We were told by the operators of these institutes that on many occasions they have had to vouch for the residents so that they could vote.

The obvious question is, why is the government moving to disenfranchise these voters? We have not heard one credible or rational argument for this. We should be encouraging people to vote. We heard the government trying to defend that this practice has to be undone because Mr. Neufeld, who was commissioned by Elections Canada to advise on reviewing the act, said there was fraud and that vouching needed to be removed. He has since clearly stated that at no time did he suggest that ineligible voters have deliberately tried to cast illegal ballots. The only other information provided by the minister to the House was information that misled the House and has since been withdrawn. We still await the rationale for disenfranchising over 100,000 voters.

Finally, on voter education, the public, many experts, and certainly my colleagues, are stunned that the government is choosing to diminish the powers and mandate of the Chief Electoral Officer and his officers to educate and encourage the public to vote.

My final point is that I am absolutely dismayed at the decision to deny the strongest recommendation from Mr. Mayrand, which was to give him the powers of investigation to compel evidence. There can only be two reasons for this, both of which are reprehensible.

• (1720)

One is that the government is intentionally blocking the ability of Elections Canada to enforce the act. The second is that it simply does not understand the enforcement system.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I want to pick up on the member's last point. In the NDP's opposition motion, there is a reference to prohibiting vouching and voter education programming. We in the Liberal Party have been very clear on the issue of compelling. We believe that Elections Canada should have the ability to compel people to testify.

As a result of Elections Canada not having that ability, one of the issues that surfaced from the last election is the issue of overspending. Elections Canada's inability to compel witness testimony poses problems in getting to the truth of the matter.

Maybe the member could expand on her last sentence or two regarding the idea of compelling a witness. I would especially ask her to make reference to the importance of not overspending as an example.

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● (1725)

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I do not want to get into the detail of a specific offence, but I do want to speak to the issue of a credible enforcement system. I speak with some experience, because I worked in the field for quite some time in my professional career.

There are many components to an effective enforcement system. One is that there must be clear offences. Additionally, as the government is proposing, we need to increase penalties. However, if we do not have the requisite powers to investigate, we cannot bring cases forward and, therefore, impose penalties.

Whether the offence is fraud, overspending, or illegal robocalls and so forth, it does not really matter and it does not matter if we increasingly improve the potential for stricter penalties, because if the officers do not have the requisite powers and mandate to compel information and testimony, they are simply not going to be able to proceed with effective cases.

Mr. Craig Scott (Toronto—Danforth, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I would like to thank my colleague for setting out so clearly some of the issues at stake. If she would indulge me, I would read a quick passage from the testimony of the Chief Electoral Officer, Marc Mayrand, before the procedure and House affairs committee. He gave very concrete examples drawn from the real world and Elections Canada's knowledge about where vouching is used. These are just some examples. I would ask whether or not you think there is any reason to disbelieve him. He said:

In the case of seniors, it is not uncommon for one of the spouses to drive and to have all the bills in their name. Right now, the other spouse can be vouched for by their partner. Similarly, seniors living with their children often must be vouched for by one of their children in order to be able to vote.

The reverse is also true. Young Canadians often live at home or, as students, move frequently. They sometimes have no documents to prove their current residential address.

First nations electors on reserve also face challenges, as the Indian status card does not include address information.

For many of these electors, vouching by another elector is the only option. Expanding the list of ID documents will not assist them in proving their address.

You spoke a lot about the mobile society that we live in. We have been listening all day to Conservative MPs almost pretending that these situations do not exist. I wonder if you think there is reason to disbelieve the Chief Electoral Officer?

The Deputy Speaker: I would like to remind all members of the House that they address their questions and comments to the Chair, not to other members.

The hon. member for Edmonton—Strathcona.

Ms. Linda Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I would be pleased to address my response to you, but I thank the member for his question, nonetheless.

As the member will have heard in my brief remarks, I have run into those scenarios in my riding, and I have heard assertions from campaign members, students, people assisting the homeless, people working with first nations, the first nations peoples themselves, and seniors. I have received letters and calls from constituents who are deeply concerned for all of those categories of people, especially those in isolated communities.

Particularly in my city, there is a highly mobile population and a major influx of new people. They are simply busy adjusting, trying to get their children into school and so forth. It is hard enough for them to find out that they have the right to vote, let alone where they vote and then what kind of information they should provide.

These are certainly huge categories. I absolutely have no cause to question the word of Mr. Mayrand.

Mr. Scott Reid (Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I am rising to join this very interesting debate so far on the motion put forward by the member for Toronto—Danforth.

I want to review the wording of the motion as a starting point, because although the debate has ranged around the suggestion of the mover that the entire fair elections bill is utterly without merit and has nothing redeeming about it, that is not what the motion he put before the House said.

The motion before the House made reference to three very specific proposals within the proposed legislation and then identified several very specific groups that, as argued in the motion, would be selectively disenfranchised. It says:

That, in the opinion of the House, proposed changes to the Elections Act that would prohibit vouching, voter education programming by Elections Canada, and the use of voter cards as identification could disenfranchise many Canadians, particularly first-time voters like youth and new Canadians, Aboriginal Canadians and seniors living in residence, and should be abandoned.

The assumption I am making is that the hon. member feels that those three groups, or four groups if one chooses to consider as separate categories first-time young voters and the first-time voters who have just recently become Canadian citizens, are selectively negatively affected by this proposed legislation. I will address those assumptions.

I want to start by pointing out some of the assertions that must be made as we cross the first column dealing with all those groups that might be deprived of the ability to vote. Here one assumes that he means de facto disenfranchisement, not de jure disenfranchisement. If that were the case, this would be an unconstitutional proposal.

All those groups in the first category or column, namely, youth, immigrants, seniors living in residences, and aboriginal Canadians, are linked with the specific problems, including the end to vouching, the provision stating that the voter identification card or voter information card cannot be used as ID, and the limits on the Chief Electoral Officer's ability to carry out advertizing programs. These can be linked so that in each case there is a problem occurring because of each of the reforms.

I would maintain that on its surface that is not a plausible hypothesis. I will give a couple of examples that will make this point. Vouching is presented as something that, if it is not permitted, will cause seniors living in residences to be unable to cast ballots. That is part of the assertion being made here.

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That clearly cannot be true. In the last election, the 2011 election, there was a controversy over whether the Etobicoke Centre election had been won by the Liberals or the Conservatives. The issue revolved around the fact that senior citizens living in closed access residences and who were therefore serviced by a mobile poll could not vote because the existing rules did not permit any vouching for them.

Vouching can only occur when another person who lives in the same poll vouches for the person. So they were already excluded from any vouching. Had vouching been permitted, one assumes that this issue might not have arisen.

There is nothing in this bill that takes away a vouching proposal dealing with senior citizens living in closed residences, who are specifically mentioned as one of the enumerated groups most at risk under this proposal.

Not only is it not part of the status quo that these individuals can be vouched for, but as far as I know the hon. member is not proposing that we change the rule and permit vouching where one person at a mobile poll can vouch for another, or people who live outside of the mobile poll can vouch for people who live in the mobile poll.

Perhaps he is suggesting that, but if he is making that suggestion or is planning to make it, he has not done so so far. He might actually want to comment on that.

• (1730)

I mention that because when the member introduced the motion today, I specifically asked him about that issue. What about the seniors who, in Etobicoke Centre, could not vote, could not be vouched for? Is there some solution?

This is a population where I think, unlike many of those who are actually vouched for in real life, it is highly unlikely that person A is going to turn up to vote ineligibly in person B's place. We can see how a mobile poll is one spot where people cannot simply walk in off the street and say, "Hey, I'm a resident of this facility. I would like to vote."

I mention that as one specific area where his proposal just does not make sense.

I want to turn to another example, the voter identification card. I keep on saying "voter identification card". It is the "voter information card". The motion suggests that if the voter information card could be used as a piece of identification, it would make it possible for individuals living at these residences to vote. The suggestion is also made that if it could be used for this purpose, it would ensure that some young people would be able to vote. I want to comment on this.

I am looking at a report issued by Elections Canada itself, the 2011 general election national youth survey report. In the summary of findings, it divided youth in Canada into five sub-groups and asked why participation rates were as low as they were. The five groups included aboriginal youth, ethnocultural youth, unemployed youth not in school, youth with disabilities, and youth in rural areas. For three of those groups, ethnocultural youth, unemployed youth, and youth with disabilities, not receiving a voter identification card

was indicated as one of the primary reasons they were not participating.

Just to make the point, the voter information card is not being received by many of these people. This is exactly why they are unable to determine where they should go to vote. It is highly unlikely that use of this card as a piece of identification would make it possible for them to cast a ballot. So, no disenfranchisement is going on here at all.

On the contrary, it appears to me that there is an indication that in both of these cases a different problem exists, one that is not addressed by the rhetoric of the opposition today, and one that unfortunately does not seem to be addressed by the Chief Electoral Officer, even though he submits a report after every election in which he tries to point out ways we can improve the electoral system.

What is missing is an adequate system of databasing Canadians, determining where they live and who is able to vote in what location.

The voter identification cards are given to voters on the basis of the preliminary list of voters. We hear the Chief Electoral Officer telling us that he has a list of voters that is over 90% accurate. Now, if we turn that around, that means that 8% or 9% of it is inaccurate. That is a large number of voters.

However, the voter ID card is not based upon the final list of electors. The final list of electors, as every candidate knows, does not get issued until a couple of days before the election. A day or two before the election, we can get this list, usually only on paper, not actually in electronic form, although that might differ in some ridings. Up until that point, both the candidates and Elections Canada are relying on the preliminary list of voters, which, by the Chief Electoral Officer's own testimony in his report on the 41st general election, is only 84% accurate.

• (1735)

Just to be clear about this, I am looking at his report on the 41st general election. On page 28, the Chief Electoral Officer says that "The preliminary lists for the 41st general election included 93 percent of Canadian electors, and 84 percent of electors were listed at the correct residential address". This means that 16% of voters, if they received any card at all, received it at the wrong address or were present when the card for the wrong person came to their address.

He goes on to say that "The currency of the lists in 10 ridings was estimated to have dropped to less than 75 percent". He does not tell us what ridings he is talking about and this is a major frustration for me. The CEO is far from transparent when it comes to providing information of this sort. We, and the committee that oversees him, have to prompt him over and over again to find out this kind of information. He does not make it clear if the 75% was 75% of people who were at the correct address. He did not even know who the 25% of voters were in certain ridings. I am not sure which of those two things he means.

The point is that the preliminary list is very problematic. It is more problematic in certain ridings than in others. There are some, and I suspect mine would be one of those ridings, where it is very good as a consequence of the fact that fewer people move and there is more security in the sense that old information will be reliable information.

Business of Supply

The Chief Electoral Officer's list is suffering from significant database problems. As anybody who maintains a database knows, there is a very high error rate, over time, and it gets worse as old information is unreliable. Simply acknowledging this is a problem and reporting on it openly would be helpful. Instead, we have to parse this information from the Chief Electoral Officer and he tries to develop methods of dealing with the problem that essentially boil down to saying that we will continually widen the basis on which we will accept that somebody is able to vote whether that individual can prove eligibility or not.

In the case of the election in Etobicoke Centre, which is the most studied example we have, many people voted. Nobody is arguing that they voted fraudulently. Many people voted who were not accounted for in a way that ensured they were eligible and that this could be demonstrated after the fact, thereby potentially putting the outcome of the election at risk.

As we know, the Supreme Court ruled on that case. In the *Opitz v. Wrzesnewskyj* ruling, a four-person majority of justices said that the election should not be overturned on that basis. A three-person minority, headed by the chief justice, decided on the contrary, that the election should be overturned because of the unreliability of the accounting for the voting, despite the fact that nobody was asserting that fraud occurred.

When we hear the sponsor of this motion and many others in the opposition benches saying that there is no problem with fraudulent voting, I am not sure whether that is true. The fact is that the record-keeping is so bad we cannot tell, or at least we cannot prove anything. What we do know is that even in the absence of fraud, mistaken voting is potentially going on, and the potential for elections to be overturned or controverted is considerable.

Justice McLachlin, along with Justice LeBel and Justice Fish, dissenting, determined that:

The federal election in the riding of Etobicoke Centre should be annulled because of votes cast by individuals who were not entitled to vote under the Act.

They did not state that the individuals were voting fraudulently.

What happened here was that the definition of the word "entitled" came under dispute, and in the end the one-person majority of the court argued in favour of a wider interpretation of the word "entitled". We came very near to seeing an election overturned as a result of that.

In consequence of the fact that there was a court case under way, Harry Neufeld was commissioned by the Chief Electoral Officer to write a report dealing with these issues. In his report, he concluded that the number of irregularities that occur under vouching amounts to something in the neighbourhood of 40% of all incidents of vouching nationwide. He has a breakdown for a number of different things, such as the general election and the number of byelections. On the whole, the number comes down to somewhere in the neighbourhood of 40%. It may be as low as 25% in one of the byelections.

• (1740)

Clearly, the issue of vouching that occurs in a way not allowing for a proper follow-through to confirm that everything was done in a valid manner is very high. That is a serious problem.

I am going to turn now to a few examples from my own life to make the point about what is wrong with using the voter information card as a method of determining whether a person is eligible to vote. I have three stories. Two of them I have given before in committee and one I just learned about today.

The first story comes from the election of 2004. When my riding boundaries were changed, we had a new deputy returning officer down in Napanee, at the far end of my riding from where I live, who inherited a substantial chunk of the riding and was unfamiliar with how things worked. When they merged the database, a large number of erroneous voter information cards were issued. This included the issuing of three voter cards to Scott Reid. At 142 Arthur Street, my house, I received a voter information card for Scott Jeffrey Reid, which is me. I also received one for Scott Reid and one for Jeffrey Reid, and I was living alone at the time. Clearly, there is a problem when that sort of thing happens.

As I pointed out to the former chief electoral officer, Jean-Pierre Kingsley, when he appeared at a committee shortly after that, I could have taken one card and voted at the returning office. They would have struck my name off the list. I could have then taken the second card and gone to the advance poll. My name would have been struck from another list. Then on election day, I could have voted at the third place and my name would have been struck off the list. No one would have been the wiser. I would have been using a piece of identification that had been issued in triplicate to me. That is my first example.

Here is my second story. After that point I moved, got married, and at the new house, which is about 100 yards on the boundary between the riding of Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington, which I represent, and the riding of Carleton—Mississippi Mills, I wrote down my address as being at that street address in Mississippi Mills, Ontario. My wife, my ex-wife actually, but at the time we were married, wrote down her name and same street address at Rural Route 1, Carleton Place, which is also correct. Both addresses are correct and both will cause the mail to be delivered to the same address. They both have the same postal code, obviously. However, Rural Route 1 starts in Carleton Place and goes into Mississippi Mills, so we got voter identification cards that told us to go and vote at two different locations in two different ridings.

Here is an interesting question. Had we not spotted this problem, had she gone and voted in the wrong riding, would that have been voter fraud? I do not know. It was Elections Canada's fault because it has an inadequate database. It was not her fault that she had a voter card telling her to vote in the wrong constituency but relying on a card and assuming it is accurate. Also, her name would not be picked up as one in the error rate that Elections Canada cites, when it says it is 84% accurate and only 16% wrong. There is another error that is going to lead to people voting mistakenly if they use the voter information card as the basis for their vote. Also, having a second piece of ID with her address would not solve that problem.

Business of Supply

The third story comes from my legislative assistant who told me today as we were discussing the bill that in the last election, he and his wife had just moved and received voter information cards addressed to the people who had lived in the house before them. They are of British ancestry, but the people who had lived in the house before them were of Vietnamese ancestry and the names were obviously Vietnamese. His wife went to the voter station, taking the card along because it told her what location to go to. When she got there, she went in, holding the card in her hand, and was issued a ballot and told she could vote. It was not her card, but it was being treated as a piece of identification. That is how lax security is when it comes to the use of the voter information card as a piece of identification.

• (1745)

Is there a problem with its use? Absolutely. That is why it was not permitted as a piece of ID, except on an experimental basis in the past. However, the Chief Electoral Officer said in his report to Parliament that he would expand its use nationwide, something he had not done in the past. That is now being prevented because it is unwise.

Far from being about disenfranchisement, as the member suggests in the motion, this is actually about keeping our system open, fair, honest, and competent.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I was very interested in my colleague's speech. By the sound of things, maybe the whole 2011 election should have been null and void, if that kind of fraud or potential mistakes were happening all across the country.

Of course, we know that is not the case. We know that Elections Canada does great work and that we are the gold standard of conducting elections in Canada and around the world.

Instead of looking at anecdotal information, perhaps we should look at what 150 political science professors across Canada have been saying about the Conservatives' proposed act and why we should be voting yes to the motion we have put forward today. These professors are saying, and many of them have been on boundaries commissions or royal commissions, that, if passed, Bill C-23 would damage the institution at the heart of our country's democracy: voting in federal elections.

Instead of drilling down to minutia on a couple of cards that were problematic, perhaps my colleague could say why he disagrees with the top political science minds in the country.

• (1750)

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, I will try this again. I have been issued three cards at my house. My ex-wife and I were issued cards telling us to vote in different locations, despite the fact we lived at the same address. My point is that these are examples of a widespread problem. How widespread is it? According to Elections Canada, 16% of Canadians have the same problem because their cards are issued on the basis of the preliminary voters list that has a 16% error rate. There are probably higher errors because there are those who are not being caught by Elections Canada.

That is Elections Canada that is reporting a 16% error rate, which amounts to millions of erroneous addresses. A 16% error rate is too much to allow this to be used as a piece of identification.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I have heard the member talk about the three cards before, and I do not question that he might have received more than one Elections Canada voting card. However, I suspect that the record would likely show that he only voted once. He might have received more than one card, but chances are that he only voted once. I suspect there are many Canadians, as he has pointed out, who have received more than one card.

I do not believe we have heard any evidence from the Conservative benches where someone has used more than one card in order to vote. I would challenge other members on that. The closest we had to that was a Conservative backbencher who stood in his place and said he witnessed people pulling things out of a trash bin and taking them to a campaign office. The problem is, we found out that was not true, that there was no merit to it.

Is the member aware of any abuse where someone has used more than one voter card to vote more than once?

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, the member has raised a worthwhile and interesting question, which I myself have raised with the Chief Electoral Officer. I mentioned how frustrated I was that they are opaque at Elections Canada. They now report on prosecutions for people having voted fraudulently; they did not do this formerly.

I had to ask the chief electoral officer of the day, Mr. Kingsley, about prosecutions. When I asked him a few years back about the previous few elections, he provided a list that showed there was less than one prosecution per election. I think there were three prosecutions over the period of five elections at that time. In the elections of 2006 and 2008, in both cases only one person in the entire country was prosecuted for any form of voting fraud. I suppose an argument could be made that no people in the entire country had engaged in electoral fraud except for these two people. They were both convicted after they wrote articles in the *Toronto Star* explaining how easy it was to vote fraudulently, and both of them did so in response to stories about how there was widespread fraudulent voting going on.

When we see it is impossible to be prosecuted except when one complains that Elections Canada has no security and writes about it, thereby incriminating oneself, I would suggest there is indeed a problem. However, that is not the only problem. It is impossible to confirm after the fact that votes have been cast, whether fraudulently or not, by people who were not eligible. That is a separate and wider question, and it should be resolved to a large degree by the bill.

• (1755)

Hon. Laurie Hawn (Edmonton Centre, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I enjoyed my colleague's comments, which were rational and detailed, as always. I would like to support him a bit.

Business of Supply

I have some evidence I want to bring to the procedure and House affairs committee at the appropriate time. In the 2006 election, I was called personally and offered hundreds of voter cards that had been left in apartment buildings and so on. Like an idiot, I said, “No, we don't do that sort of thing”. I should have said, “Yes, come on down”, and had the police waiting.

In the 2006 election, there were hundreds of people removed from the voters list, because it was clear that they did not live in the riding and that they intended to vote fraudulently. They did not, because we caught them. I suggest, as my colleague has also suggested, that this does not happen in one place. Is the Elections Canada system good? Absolutely. Is it the gold standard? Maybe. However, it is not perfect and probably never will be.

I would like to ask for my colleague's comments on that.

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, I do not think the question is whether Elections Canada is the gold standard or whether the people there have sterling characters or anything like that. I have a problem with some of the reporting, which I mentioned. I lobbied the minister to try to put in some additional reporting requirements for Elections Canada, and some of that is incorporated in the new legislation. That is a good thing.

Openness is always the most appropriate thing for government agencies, but the fundamental problem I am pointing to is a database issue. It is hard to keep a database current. It is harder in areas with high turnover. That is the fundamental problem. In 10 ridings across the country, according to Elections Canada, there was a rate of correct voter identification of less than 75%. That is more than a serious problem. That is a catastrophic problem for those ridings, and it has not been revealed where those ridings are.

Sterling or not, gold standard or not, we have a situation whereby some ridings essentially have no meaningful voter identification system. Some of those ridings may well be ridings where the election results are close. This could potentially result in elections being controverted, as almost happened in Etobicoke Centre.

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the comments of my colleague opposite. However, as has been said over and over again, the actual existence of fraud is negligible. It is zero. We are using a sledgehammer to kill something that is not happening. New Democrats would like the government to kill the bill.

On the issue of the member or his spouse having received more than one voter card, the voter card could only be used to identify where one lives. It cannot be used to prove who one is. Unless a person has fraudulent ID to prove that he or she is someone else, one cannot use a voter identification card to prove who one is. Unless the member is intent on committing fraud, which people are going to be able to do no matter what, regardless of whether there is a voter information card available, this whole business of removing the possibility of using a voter information card is a big red herring, and we really ought to get to the real problem, which we have identified.

There are problems with the lists. We know that there are problems with the lists. We know that there are problems with certain individuals abusing the process by phoning people and telling them not to vote. We know that there are problems with funding.

Why can we not get at the real problems instead of this phony problem of the voter information card?

Mr. Scott Reid: Mr. Speaker, the example I gave was of a card my former spouse, Lynda, had that would have actually directed her to vote in the wrong riding. It had her address right, but the address was interpreted as being in the wrong constituency. They had her assigned to a poll number that was in the wrong constituency as well. This was, in all fairness, an Ontario election issue, but it is the same database that applies and the same problem that exists. I have the same problem in my own database of having people on these rural routes in the wrong riding. That is an example.

The issue of people being assigned to the wrong poll is more widespread than that. In the 2004 election, there were situations of people living in Perth Road Village, in my riding, about 100 kilometres away from Perth, who were being assigned on their cards to vote 100 kilometres from their homes. There were numerous people sent to the wrong poll because of errors made by Elections Canada. There is a very high error rate in general, and it tends to go higher when there are changes such as riding redistributions. That is a major issue.

Again, it is not an issue of voter fraud, although I do think some voter fraud exists in this country. It is an issue of a database disaster, run by an agency that will not admit that it is a problem. That is the issue here.

• (1800)

Mr. Kennedy Stewart (Burnaby—Douglas, NDP): Mr. Speaker, it is a great pleasure to rise here this evening and support the motion the member for Toronto—Danforth has put forward, and I would like to thank him for his work on this file. He has done a tremendous job not just on this issue but on all the issues he is handling regarding democracy in this country.

I would just remind you, Mr. Speaker, that I will be splitting my time with the member for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine.

Democratic reform and protecting democracy in Canada are issues that are very close to my heart. I have studied and worked on this topic for 20 years, both as a student and as a professor. There are many concerns we have with the so-called fair elections act that has been put forward by the government, and this motion directly calls for its rejection. It is really worth reading the motion in detail, because it sums up our problems. It says:

That, in the opinion of the House, proposed changes to the Elections Act that would prohibit vouching, voter education programming by Elections Canada, and the use of voter cards as identification could disenfranchise many Canadians, particularly first-time voters like youth and new Canadians, Aboriginal Canadians and seniors living in residence, and should be abandoned.

This really sums up what will be the crux of my speech and the concerns many Canadians have, regular Canadians but also those who have, as I have, spent their lives studying this issue. In fact, I hope to show in this short speech that the Conservative proposals are not in the best interests of Canadians and that our motion should be passed.

Business of Supply

Canada has long been seen as one of the most democratic countries in the world. Indeed, Elections Canada is consulted internationally so that other countries can learn how we do things here. The way we conduct our elections is the gold standard of how elections are conducted around the world and is something we should be proud of. However, I look now at how our democracy is performing overall, and I wonder if we have not hit a bit of a peak or have even passed our peak.

Voter turnout has been on a slow decline since the 1980s, and what is worse, we are creating cycles of non-voting. Citizens, for example, no longer join political parties. Less than two per cent of the citizenry is active in political parties. Once held in high regard, politicians are now loathed by the public, and in fact, both provincial and federal legislatures do not reflect the populations they represent. We could go on and on about where things used to be better and are declining.

I want to focus my remarks on voter turnout and use this to show why the Conservatives' proposed act is not only wrong in detail but is wrong in spirit and in the process by which it would be implemented.

In the 1960s, almost 80% of those eligible to cast votes did so. In the 2011 election, voter turnout dropped to just over 60%, a decline of 20 percentage points. This is not a one-off decline. It is not a dip in voter turnout. This is really a pattern. Turnout has not been higher than 65% in this country any time in this century. It has declined, and we are entering a period of further decline. That is why I am saying again that I think democracy has perhaps peaked in Canada.

The reasons for the decline in turnout are many, but some have to do with declining government investment in efforts to help get people to the polls. The Conservative proposals not only would take money away, for example, for door-to-door registration but would actually add additional barriers to participation. Why I say that this violates the spirit of what we try to do here in Canada is that it is going to make our low turnout problem even worse.

This is a very serious situation from two perspectives. First, many would agree that high voter turnout is in itself a good thing, and low voter turnout, in turn, is a bad thing. Second, and perhaps more serious, is that disengagement can undermine the legitimacy of the government, and in the extreme case, lead to instability. The low levels of turnout we now have will only get worse, especially if the Conservatives force this bill through Parliament.

It is worth noting the kind of cycle we are having of low voter turnout. Of those eligible to vote for the first time in 1965, almost 70% voted. By 2008, the turnout of voters who were first eligible to vote in 1965 had increased to 75%.

• (1805)

If we look at first-time voters in the year 2000, of those eligible to vote in 2004, only 34% voted. By the 2008 election, this group was still stuck at 34%.

What we are getting is a cycle of non-voting. Of those born in the sixties, 70% voted and have continued to vote in those numbers as we moved forward through elections. Of those born in the 20th century, one-third are voting, and they are stuck with one-third voting.

This is the cycle of non-voting of which political scientists speak. It is something we have to work to fix rather than what this Conservative bill proposes to do, which will make things worse.

Turnouts are low and dropping, non-voters are continuing to be non-voters, and there are more groups that are permanently disenfranchised from our voting system.

It is important not to take my word for it. Recently, over 150 political scientists wrote an open letter to the government on this matter. It is worth repeating what they had to say. These 150 professors are the cream of the crop as far as political scientists go in Canada. They are mostly chairs and full professors as well as people who all parties in the House have called upon to serve on boundary review committees, to head up royal commissions, and to advise on any matters to do with democracy. It is a multi-partisan group, one that some parties would favour and others would not favour. It is the grand collection of political scientists.

In their open letter to the Prime Minister and the Parliament of Canada, they said that if Bill C-23 was passed, it “would damage the institution at the heart of the country's democracy: voting in federal elections”.

Further, these 150 political scientists urged the government to heed the call for wider consultation in vetting the bill.

This is another problem with what is happening here in terms of the spirit of democratic reform. In the past, any changes to elections would be done in a non-partisan or multi-partisan way. Not only would we consult Elections Canada and experts around the country and perhaps outside the country, we would definitely be consulting the Canadian public. This has been abandoned with Bill C-23. We have had closure on debate, and this bill is being rammed through without any real discussion and without discussion with Elections Canada, which seems absurd, since that is the institution at the centre of this legislation.

These 150 political scientists are urging the government to consult more widely. While they agree, and we have heard today, that there are some things that could be looked at with our electoral system, they are worried about the serious damage that will occur with the passing of Bill C-23.

It is worth noting who these folks are, the drafters of this open letter, which can be seen in many publications, such as the *National Post* or *The Globe and Mail*. Professors Deveaux, Williams, Cameron, Dawood, Lenard, and Fuji Johnson are the main drafters. However, this letter has also been signed by 16 past-presidents of the Canadian Political Science Association: Caroline Andrew, Michael Atkinson, Keith Banting, Sylvia Bashevkin, André Blais, Kenneth Carty, John Courtney, Elisabeth Gidengil, Richard Johnston, Peter Russell, Grace Skogstad, David Smith, Miriam Smith, Reeta Tremblay, Graham White, and Robert Young.

Business of Supply

If we put all of these signatories to the letter in a room, I would hazard a guess that we could solve any political science problem we have in this country. Of course, none of these people have been consulted on this bill. It is outrageous that these changes are going ahead and are being forced through Parliament without any consultation at all and without any expert advice. It has been drafted in a back room. It is something that would advantage one party over other parties, and it violates the spirit of what we have done here in the past. That is why I support the opposition day motion that has been put forward today.

I call upon the government to drop Bill C-23. Let us go back to the drawing board and consult with experts and regular Canadians to figure out how to make democracy better and how to improve our falling voter turnout.

• (1810)

[Translation]

Mr. Alain Giguère (Marc-Aurèle-Fortin, NDP): Mr. Speaker, my question is rather simple. On the one hand, experts are introduced who tell us that this bill is dangerous for democracy. On the other hand, we have the evidence of the second-last Conservative member, who said that someone tried to give him hundreds of voter cards, that he should have called the police and he regrets not doing so.

According to a very clear and simple rule of law, silence is consent. By failing to report an illegal act meant to rig the election, the member is himself guilty of election rigging. He presented that as an anecdote to justify the amendments to this legislation to prevent what he himself encouraged.

I would like my distinguished colleague to tell us how much importance we should place on anecdotes told by people who do not do their civic duty or their duty as an MP and report someone who tries to rig an election, compared to the importance we should place on experts who support us and encourage us to value our democracy.

[English]

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Mr. Speaker, I too was shocked when one of our colleagues across the way stood up moments ago and said that somebody had approached him with hundreds of voting cards that he was supposed to use to commit fraud in an election. I think we should be looking into that further.

Hon. Laurie Hawn: Absolutely, please do.

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Right, Mr. Speaker. We are hearing from across the way that the member would like to be investigated for this claim. I think that should be looked into.

Mr. Kevin Lamoureux (Winnipeg North, Lib.): Mr. Speaker, I realize we are winding up the debate at this juncture. I would just indicate that we do support the motion that has been brought forward by the NDP, but we want to emphasize just how bad this legislation really is. At the end of the day, we want to have good sound election laws. We see some of the shortcomings, such as not allowing Elections Canada to compel witnesses.

Our system is going to be weakened by the Conservative majority government's attitude towards democracy.

Could the member provide comment in regard to the way in which the government, on its own, without consultation, without any sort of

consensus building—whether it is with Elections Canada, opposition parties, or stakeholders in general—has made the decision to force this thing through, including using time allocation? It is not a fairness bill; it is more of a Conservative elections bill. Could the member provide comment on that?

Mr. Kennedy Stewart: Mr. Speaker, this is exactly the wrong way to reform or make changes to how democracy works in the country. It is something one could expect in a place that has no experience with democracy, where one party is trying to rig elections in its favour.

I do not think any scholar of politics would at all agree that this is the way to do anything. In fact, Canadians are saying this. It will hurt the Conservatives in the next election. I think they are going to have a very hard time making these changes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Barry Devolin): It being 6:15 p.m., and today being the final supply day in the period ending March 26, 2014, 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 motion. Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

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 nays have it.

And five or more members having risen:

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

• (1840)

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

(Division No. 80)

YEAS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Aubin
Bélanger
Benskin
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Brahmi
Brosseau
Caron
Cash
Chicoine
Choquette
Cleary
Côté

Andrews
Ashton
Ayala
Bennett
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brison
Byrne
Casey
Charlton
Chisholm
Christopherson
Comartin
Cotler

Business of Supply

Crowder
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Dubourg
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Fortin
Garneau
Genest
Giguère
Goodale
Grogulé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Jacob
Julian
Lamoureux
Larose
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu
Mai
Masse
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nicholls
Pacetti
Péclet
Plamondon
Rafferty
Rathgeber
Raynault
Rousseau
Sandhu
Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Windsor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
Sitsabaiesan
Stewart
Sullivan
Toone
Trudeau
Valeriotte — 131

Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dion
Donnelly
Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseau
Eyking
Freeman
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Godin
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hsu
Hyer
Jones
Karygiannis
Lapointe
Latendresse
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leslie
MacAulay
Marston
Mathysen
McGuinty
Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mourani
Murray
Nash
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Perreault
Quach
Rankin
Ravignat
Regan
Saganash
Scott
Sgro
St-Denis
Stoffer
Thibeault
Tremblay
Turmel

Goldring
Gosal
Grewal
Hawn
Hiebert
Hoback
James
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
Mayes
McLeod
Merrifield
Moore (Fundy Royal)
O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Payne
Preston
Reid
Richards
Ritz
Schellenberger
Shea
Smith
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Toet
Trottier
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson
Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 149

Goodyear
Gourde
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hillyer
Holder
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Leef
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Maguire
McColeman
Menegakis
Miller
Norlock
Oliver
Opitz
Paradis
Poilievre
Rajotte
Rempel
Rickford
Saxton
Seeback
Shipley
Sopuck
Stanton
Strahl
Tilson
Trost
Truppe
Valcourt
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

NAYS

Members

Ablonczy
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anderson
Ashfield
Bateman
Bergen
Bezan
Block
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Chisu
Clarke
Crockatt
Davidson
Del Mastro
Dreeshen
Dykstra
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Fletcher
Gallant
Glover

Adler
Albas
Alexander
Allison
Ambrose
Armstrong
Aspin
Benoit
Bernier
Blaney
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Cannan
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Daniel
Dechert
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Falk
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Galipeau
Gill
Goguen

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion defeated.

* * *

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES (C), 2013-2014

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC) moved:

That the Supplementary Estimates (C) for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2014, be concurred in.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

Business of Supply

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

• (1850)

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

*(Division No. 81)***YEAS**

Members

Ablonczy	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Bateman	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockett	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Falk
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	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 (Fundy Royal)	Norlock
O'Connor	Oliver
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Paradis
Payne	Poilievre
Preston	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shipley	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott

Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer — 150

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Aubin	Ayala
Bélanger	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brison
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 (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseau
Easter	Eyking
Fortin	Freeman
Gameau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Grogulé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Jones
Julian	Karygiannis
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Énard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Masse	Mathysen
McCallum	McGuinity
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
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Péclet	Perreault
Plamondon	Quach
Rafferty	Rankin
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Scott	Sellah
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	St-Denis
Stewart	Stoffer
Sullivan	Thibeault
Toone	Tremblay
Trudeau	Turmel
Valeriote — 129	

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Business of Supply

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC) moved that Bill C-28, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the financial year ending March 31, 2014, be now read a first time.

(Motion deemed adopted and bill read the first time)

Hon. Tony Clement moved that the bill be read the second time and referred to committee of the whole.

Hon. John Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I rise on a point of order.

I request the unanimous consent of this House to apply the results from the previous recorded division to this one.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

Ms. Nycole Turmel: Mr. Speaker, an extra vote will have to be added this time, since the member for Scarborough—Rouge River is back in her seat.

[*English*]

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

(Division No. 82)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Bateman	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Falk
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	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 (Fundy Royal)	Norlock
O'Connor	Oliver
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Paradis
Payne	Poilievre
Preston	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shipley	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	Williamson
Weston (Saint John)	Woodworth
Wilks	Young (Oakville)
Wong	Zimmer — 150
Yelich	
Young (Vancouver South)	

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Aubin	Ayala
Bélangier	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brison
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 (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseault
Easter	Eyking
Fortin	Freeman
Garneau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Grogulé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Jones
Julian	Karygiannis
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
Masse	Mathysen
McCallum	McGuinty
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud

Business of Supply

Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mourani
Mulcair	Murray
Nantel	Nash
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Péclet	Perreault
Plamondon	Quach
Rafferty	Rankin
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau
Saganash	Sandhu
Scott	Sellah
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
St-Denis	Stewart
Stoffer	Sullivan
Thibeault	Toone
Tremblay	Trudeau
Turnel	Valeriote— 130

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Mr. Speaker, the Green Party is voting no.

The Speaker: I think that was captured in the previous recorded division, which has just recently been applied to this past question. That should be fine.

I do now leave the Chair for the House to go into committee of the whole.

(Bill read the second time and the House went into committee of the whole thereon, Mr. Joe Comartin in the chair)

(On clause 2)

[*Translation*]

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat: Mr. Chair, could the President of the Treasury Board confirm to members of the House that the bill is in its usual form?

• (1855)

Hon. Tony Clement: Mr. Chair, the presentation of this bill is identical to that used during the previous supply period.

The Chair: Shall clause 2 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 2 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 3 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 3 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 4 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 4 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 5 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 5 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 6 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 6 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 7 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 7 agreed to)

[*English*]

The Chair: Shall schedule 1 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Schedule 1 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall schedule 2 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Schedule 2 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 1 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Clause 1 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the preamble carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Preamble agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Title agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the bill carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Bill agreed to)

The Chair: Shall I rise and report the bill?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.

(Bill reported)

Hon. Tony Clement moved that the bill be concurred in.

Hon. John Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I request the unanimous consent of the House to apply the results from the previous recorded division to this one.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

(Division No. 83)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
 Aglukkaq
 Albrecht
 Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
 Ambler
 Anderson
 Ashfield
 Bateman
 Bergen
 Bezan
 Block
 Braid
 Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
 Brown (Barrie)
 Butt
 Calkins
 Carmichael
 Chisu
 Clarke
 Crockett
 Davidson
 Del Mastro
 Dreeshen
 Dykstra
 Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
 Fletcher
 Gallant
 Glover
 Goldring
 Gosal
 Grewal
 Hawn
 Hiebert
 Hoback
 James
 Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
 Kent
 Komamicki
 Lake
 Lebel
 Leitch
 Leung
 Lobb
 Lunney
 MacKenzie
 Mayes
 McLeod
 Merrifield
 Moore (Fundy Royal)
 O'Connor
 O'Neill Gordon
 O'Toole
 Payne
 Preston
 Rathgeber
 Rempel
 Rickford
 Saxton
 Seeback
 Shipley
 Sopuck
 Stanton
 Strahl
 Tilson

Adler
 Albas
 Alexander
 Allison
 Ambrose
 Armstrong
 Aspin
 Benoit
 Bernier
 Blaney
 Boughen
 Breitzkreuz
 Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
 Bruinooog
 Calandra
 Cannan
 Carrie
 Chong
 Clement
 Daniel
 Dechert
 Devolin
 Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
 Falk
 Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
 Galipeau
 Gill
 Goguen
 Goodyear
 Gourde
 Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
 Hayes
 Hillyer
 Holder
 Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
 Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
 Kerr
 Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
 Lauzon
 Leef
 Lemieux
 Lizon
 Lukiwski
 MacKay (Central Nova)
 Maguire
 McColeman
 Menegakis
 Miller
 Norlock
 Oliver
 Opitz
 Paradis
 Poilievre
 Rajotte
 Reid
 Richards
 Ritz
 Schellenberger
 Shea
 Smith
 Sorenson
 Storseth
 Sweet
 Toet

Trost
 Truppe
 Valcourt
 Van Loan
 Wallace
 Warkentin
 Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
 Weston (Saint John)
 Wilks
 Wong
 Yelich
 Young (Vancouver South)

Trotter
 Uppal
 Van Kesteren
 Vellacott
 Warawa
 Watson
 Williamson
 Woodworth
 Young (Oakville)
 Zimmer — 150

Business of Supply

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
 Angus
 Aubin
 Bélanger
 Benskin
 Blanchette
 Boivin
 Boulerice
 Brahmi
 Brosseau
 Caron
 Cash
 Chicoine
 Choquette
 Cleary
 Côté
 Crowder
 Cuzner
 Davies (Vancouver East)
 Dewar
 Dionne Labelle
 Doré Lefebvre
 Dubourg
 Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
 Easter
 Fortin
 Gameau
 Genest
 Giguère
 Goodale
 Groguhé
 Harris (St. John's East)
 Hughes
 Jacob
 Julian
 Lamoureux
 Larose
 Laverdière
 LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
 Liu
 Mai
 Masse
 McCallum
 McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
 Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
 Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
 Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
 Mulcair
 Nantel
 Nicholls
 Pacetti
 Péclet
 Plamondon
 Rafferty
 Ravignat
 Regan
 Saganash
 Scott
 Sgro
 Sims (Newton—North Delta)
 St-Denis
 Stoffler
 Thibeault
 Tremblay
 Turmel

Andrews
 Ashton
 Ayala
 Bennett
 Bevington
 Blanchette-Lamothe
 Borg
 Boutin-Sweet
 Brison
 Byrne
 Casey
 Charlton
 Chisholm
 Christopherson
 Comartin
 Cotler
 Cullen
 Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
 Day
 Dion
 Donnelly
 Dubé
 Duncan (Etobicoke North)
 Dusseault
 Eyking
 Freeman
 Garrison
 Genest-Jourdain
 Godin
 Gravelle
 Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
 Hsu
 Hyer
 Jones
 Karygiannis
 Lapointe
 Latendresse
 LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
 Leslie
 MacAulay
 Marston
 Mathysen
 McGuinty
 Michaud
 Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
 Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
 Mourani
 Murray
 Nash
 Nunez-Melo
 Papillon
 Perreault
 Quach
 Rankin
 Raynault
 Rousseau
 Sandhu
 Sellah
 Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
 Sitsabaiesan
 Stewart
 Sullivan
 Toone
 Trudeau
 Valeriote — 130

Business of Supply

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

[*Translation*]

Hon. Tony Clement moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

[*English*]

Hon. John Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I request the unanimous consent of the House to apply the results from the previous recorded division to this one.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

(*Division No. 84*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Bateman	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Bloch	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Falk
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	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
Lumney	MacKay (Central Nova)
MacKenzie	Maguire
Mayes	McColeman
McLeod	Menegakis

Merrifield	Miller
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Norlock
O'Connor	Oliver
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz
O'Toole	Paradis
Payne	Poilievre
Preston	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shipley	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Trost	Trotter
Truppe	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer — 150

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Aubin	Ayala
Bélangier	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brison
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 (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseauit
Easter	Eyking
Fortin	Freeman
Garneau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Grogue	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Jones
Julian	Karygiannis
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
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
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo

Business of Supply

Pacetti
Péclet
Plamondon
Rafferty
Ravignat
Regan
Saganash
Scott
Sgro
Sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
St-Denis
Stoffer
Thibeault
Tremblay
Turnel

Papillon
Perreault
Quach
Rankin
Raynault
Rousseau
Sandhu
Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor)
Sitsabaiesan
Stewart
Sullivan
Toone
Trudeau
Valerioté — 130

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
(Bill read the third time and passed)

* * *

INTERIM SUPPLY

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC) moved:

That this House do concur in Interim Supply as follows:

That a sum not exceeding \$24,821,234,862.66 being composed of:

(1) three twelfths (\$15,732,773,392.25) of the total of the amounts of the items set forth in the Proposed Schedule 1 and Schedule 2 of the Main Estimates for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2015 which were laid upon the Table on Thursday, February 27, 2014, except for those items below:

(2) eleven twelfths of the total of the amount of Atomic Energy of Canada Limited Vote 1, Office of Infrastructure of Canada Vote 1 and Treasury Board Secretariat Vote 5 (Schedule 1.1), of the said Estimates, \$783,010,944.83;

(3) nine twelfths of the total of the amount of Indian Residential Schools Truth and Reconciliation Commission Vote 1 and The Jacques-Cartier and Champlain Bridges Inc. Vote 1 (Schedule 1.2), of the said Estimates, \$111,172,914.00;

(4) eight twelfths of the total of the amount of Justice Vote 1 (Schedule 1.3), of the said Estimates, \$157,907,386.00;

(5) seven twelfths of the total of the amount of Canada Council for the Arts Vote 1, Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety Vote 1, Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission Vote 1, Canadian Polar Commission Vote 1, Transport Vote 5 and Treasury Board Secretariat Vote 1 (Schedule 1.4), of the said Estimates, \$351,200,001.25;

(6) six twelfths of the total of the amount of Canadian Broadcasting Corporation Vote 1, Canadian Grain Commission Vote 1, Natural Resources Vote 5, Royal Canadian Mounted Police External Review Committee Vote 1, Statistics Canada Vote 1 and VIA Rail Canada Inc. Vote 1 (Schedule 1.5), of the said Estimates, \$728,128,527.00;

(7) five twelfths of the total of the amount of Canadian Food Inspection Agency Vote 1, Canadian Space Agency Vote 10, Employment and Social Development Vote 5, Finance Vote 5, National Arts Centre Corporation Vote 1, National Energy Board Vote 1, Public Health Agency of Canada Votes 1 and 10 and Transport Vote 10 (Schedule 1.6), of the said Estimates, \$1,318,467,241.68;

(8) four twelfths of the total of the amount of Canadian Air Transport Security Authority Vote 1, Canadian Space Agency Vote 5, Citizenship and Immigration Vote 5, Health Vote 10, House of Commons Vote 1, Indian Affairs and Northern Development Votes 1 and 10, Industry Votes 1, 5 and 10, Library of Parliament Vote 1, National Battlefields Commission Vote 1, National Film Board Vote 1, Natural Resources Vote 1, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council Vote 5, Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness Vote 1, Public Service Commission Vote 1, Royal Canadian Mounted Police Vote 1 and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Vote 5 (Schedule 1.7), of the said Estimates, \$5,638,574,455.65;

be granted to Her Majesty on account of the fiscal year ending March 31, 2015.

The Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House to adopt the motion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: No.

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

Some hon. members: Yea.

The Speaker: All those opposed will please say nay.

Some hon. members: Nay.

The Speaker: In my opinion the yeas have it.

And five or more members having risen:

● (1905)

[Translation]

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

(Division No. 85)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anderson
Ashfield
Bateman
Bergen
Bezan
Block
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Chisu
Clarke
Crockatt
Davidson
Del Mastro
Dreeshen
Dykstra
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Fletcher
Gallant
Glover
Goldring
Gosal
Grewal
Hawn
Hiebert
Hoback
James
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
Mayes
McLeod
Merrifield
Moore (Fundy Royal)
O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Payne

Adler
Albas
Alexander
Allison
Ambrose
Armstrong
Aspin
Benoit
Bernier
Blaney
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Cannan
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Daniel
Dechert
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Falk
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Galipeau
Gill
Goguen
Goodyear
Gourde
Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hayes
Hillyer
Holder
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Leaf
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukivski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Maguire
McColeman
Menegakis
Miller
Norlock
Oliver
Opitz
Paradis
Poilievre

Business of Supply

Preston	Rajotte
Rathgeber	Reid
Rempel	Richards
Rickford	Ritz
Saxton	Schellenberger
Seeback	Shea
Shipley	Smith
Sopuck	Sorenson
Stanton	Storseth
Strahl	Sweet
Tilson	Toet
Trost	Trottier
Truppe	Uppal
Valcourt	Van Kesteren
Van Loan	Vellacott
Wallace	Warawa
Warkentin	Watson
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	
Weston (Saint John)	
Wilks	Williamson
Wong	Woodworth
Yelich	Young (Oakville)
Young (Vancouver South)	Zimmer— 150

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Aubin	Ayala
Bélanger	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brison
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 (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseault
Easter	Eyking
Fortin	Freeman
Garneau	Garrison
Genest	Genest-Jourdain
Giguère	Godin
Goodale	Gravelle
Groguhé	Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Harris (St. John's East)	Hsu
Hughes	Hyer
Jacob	Jones
Julian	Karygiannis
Lamoureux	Lapointe
Larose	Latendresse
Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Liu	MacAulay
Mai	Marston
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
Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Pacetti	Papillon
Péclet	Perreault
Plamondon	Quach
Rafferty	Rankin
Ravignat	Raynault
Regan	Rousseau

Saganash	Sandhu
Scott	Sellah
Sgro	Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
St-Denis	Stewart
Stoffer	Sullivan
Thibeault	Toone
Tremblay	Trudeau
Turmel	Valeriote— 130

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Hon. Tony Clement (President of the Treasury Board, CPC) moved for leave to introduce Bill C-29, An Act for granting to Her Majesty certain sums of money for the federal public administration for the financial year ending March 31, 2015.

(Motion agreed to and bill read the first time)

[English]

Hon. Tony Clement moved that the bill be read the second time and referred to a committee of the whole.

Hon. John Duncan: Mr. Speaker, if you seek it, I believe you would find unanimous consent of the House to apply the results from the previous recorded division to this one.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

(Division No. 86)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Bateman	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Bloek	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Falk
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)
Hawn	Hayes
Hiebert	Hillyer

Business of Supply

Hoback
James
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)
Kent
Komarnicki
Lake
Lebel
Leitch
Leung
Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
Mayes
McLeod
Merrifield
Moore (Fundy Royal)
O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Payne
Preston
Rathgeber
Rempel
Rickford
Saxton
Seeback
Shiple
Sopuck
Stanton
Strahl
Tilson
Trost
Truppe
Valcourt
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

Holder
Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)
Kenney (Calgary Southeast)
Kerr
Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)
Lauzon
Leaf
Lemieux
Lizon
Lukiwski
MacKay (Central Nova)
Maguire
McColeman
Menegakis
Miller
Norlock
Oliver
Opitz
Paradis
Poilievre
Rajotte
Reid
Richards
Ritz
Schellenberger
Shea
Smith
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Toet
Trottier
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer — 150

Larose
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu
Mai
Masse
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)
Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nicholls
Pacetti
Péclet
Plamondon
Rafferty
Ravignat
Regan
Saganash
Scott
Sgro
sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
St-Denis
Stoffer
Thibeault
Tremblay
Turmel

Latendresse
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leslie
MacAulay
Marston
Mathysen
McGuinty
Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mourani
Murray
Nash
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Perreault
Quach
Rankin
Raynault
Rousseau
Sandhu
Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
sor)
Sitsabaiesan
Stewart
Sullivan
Toone
Trudeau
Valeriote — 130

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Accordingly, the bill stands referred to a committee of the whole, and I do now leave the chair for the House to go into committee of the whole.

(Bill read the second time and the House went into committee of the whole thereon, Mr. Joe Comartin in the chair)

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Order, please. The House is now in committee of the whole on Bill C-29.

Mr. Mathieu Ravignat: Mr. Chair, I would like the President of the Treasury Board to confirm to the House that the bill is in its usual form and if not, to explain the changes.

Hon. Tony Clement: Mr. Chair, the proportions requested in the bill are intended to provide for all necessary requirements of the federal public administration up to the second supply period of fiscal 2014-15. The bill does not release the full amount of any of the items.

[*English*]

The form of this bill has changed to present organizations in alphabetical order, as shown in the main estimates. This change resulted from comments provided by the Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates during its review of estimates and supplies. However, I can say that the passing of this bill will not prejudice the rights and privileges of members to criticize any item in the estimates when it comes up for consideration in committee. The usual undertaking is hereby given that such rights and privileges will be respected and will not be curtailed or restricted in any way as a result of the passing of this measure.

[*Translation*]

The Chair: Shall clause 2 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Aubin
Bélangier
Benskin
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Brahmi
Brosseau
Caron
Cash
Chicoine
Choquette
Cleary
Côté
Crowder
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Dubourg
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Fortin
Garneau
Genest
Giguère
Goodale
Grogulé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Jacob
Julian
Lamoureux

Andrews
Ashton
Ayala
Bennett
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brisson
Byrne
Casey
Charlton
Chisholm
Christopherson
Comartin
Cotler
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dion
Donnelly
Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseault
Eyking
Freeman
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Godin
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hsu
Hyer
Jones
Karygiannis
Lapointe

Business of Supply

(Clause 2 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 3 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 3 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 4 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 4 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 5 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 5 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 6 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 6 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 7 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

• (1910)

[*English*]

The Chair: Shall schedule 1 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Schedule 1 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall schedule 2 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Schedule 2 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall clause 1 carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Clause 1 agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the preamble carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Preamble agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the title carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Title agreed to)

The Chair: Shall the bill carry?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Some hon. members: On division.
(Bill agreed to)

The Chair: Shall I rise and report the bill?

Some hon. members: Agreed.
(Bill reported)

Hon. Tony Clement moved that the bill be concurred in at the report stage.

Hon. John Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I request the unanimous consent of the House to apply the results from the previous recorded vote to this one.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

(*Division No. 87*)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy	Adler
Aglukkaq	Albas
Albrecht	Alexander
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)	Allison
Ambler	Ambrose
Anderson	Armstrong
Ashfield	Aspin
Bateman	Benoit
Bergen	Bernier
Bezan	Blaney
Block	Boughen
Braid	Breitkreuz
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)	Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Brown (Barrie)	Bruinooge
Butt	Calandra
Calkins	Cannan
Carmichael	Carrie
Chisu	Chong
Clarke	Clement
Crockatt	Daniel
Davidson	Dechert
Del Mastro	Devolin
Dreeshen	Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Dykstra	Falk
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)	Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Fletcher	Galipeau
Gallant	Gill
Glover	Goguen
Goldring	Goodyear
Gosal	Gourde
Grewal	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

Business of Supply

Lobb
Lunney
MacKenzie
Mayes
McLeod
Merrifield
Moore (Fundy Royal)
O'Connor
O'Neill Gordon
O'Toole
Payne
Preston
Rathgeber
Rempel
Rickford
Saxton
Seeback
Shipley
Sopuck
Stanton
Strahl
Tilson
Trost
Truppe
Valcourt
Van Loan
Wallace
Warkentin
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)
Weston (Saint John)
Wilks
Wong
Yelich
Young (Vancouver South)

Lukiwski
Mackay (Central Nova)
Maguire
McColeman
Menegakis
Miller
Norlock
Oliver
Opitz
Paradis
Poilievre
Rajotte
Reid
Richards
Ritz
Schellenberger
Shea
Smith
Sorenson
Storseth
Sweet
Toet
Trottier
Uppal
Van Kesteren
Vellacott
Warawa
Watson
Williamson
Woodworth
Young (Oakville)
Zimmer— 150

Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)
Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)
Mulcair
Nantel
Nicholls
Pacetti
Péclet
Plamondon
Rafferty
Ravnignat
Regan
Saganash
Scott
Sgro
sor)
Sims (Newton—North Delta)
St-Denis
Stoffer
Thibeault
Tremblay
Turmel

Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Mourani
Murray
Nash
Nunez-Melo
Papillon
Perreault
Quach
Rankin
Raynault
Rousseau
Sandhu
Sellah
Simms (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind-
Sitsabaesan
Stewart
Sullivan
Toone
Trudeau
Valeriote— 130

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

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

Some hon. members: Agreed.

Hon. Tony Clement moved that the bill be read the third time and passed.

Hon. John Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I request the unanimous consent of the House to apply the results from the previous recorded division to this one.

The Speaker: Is there unanimous consent to proceed in this fashion?

Some hon. members: Agreed.

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

(Division No. 88)

YEAS

Members

Ablonczy
Aglukkaq
Albrecht
Allen (Tobique—Mactaquac)
Ambler
Anderson
Ashfield
Bateman
Bergen
Bezan
Block
Braid
Brown (Leeds—Grenville)
Brown (Barrie)
Butt
Calkins
Carmichael
Chisu
Clarke
Crockatt
Davidson
Del Mastro
Dreeshen
Dykstra
Findlay (Delta—Richmond East)
Fletcher
Gallant
Glover
Goldring

Adler
Albas
Alexander
Allison
Ambrose
Armstrong
Aspin
Benoit
Bernier
Blaney
Boughen
Breitkreuz
Brown (Newmarket—Aurora)
Bruinooge
Calandra
Cannan
Carrie
Chong
Clement
Daniel
Dechert
Devolin
Duncan (Vancouver Island North)
Falk
Finley (Haldimand—Norfolk)
Galipeau
Gill
Gougen
Goodyear

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)
Angus
Aubin
Bélanger
Benskin
Blanchette
Boivin
Boulerice
Brahmi
Brosseau
Caron
Cash
Chicoine
Choquette
Cleary
Côté
Crowder
Cuzner
Davies (Vancouver East)
Dewar
Dionne Labelle
Doré Lefebvre
Dubourg
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)
Easter
Fortin
Garneau
Genest
Giguère
Goodale
Groguhé
Harris (St. John's East)
Hughes
Jacob
Julian
Lamoureux
Larose
Laverdière
LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)
Liu
Mai
Masse
McCallum
McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)
Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)

Andrews
Ashton
Ayala
Bennett
Bevington
Blanchette-Lamothe
Borg
Boutin-Sweet
Brisson
Byrne
Casey
Charlton
Chisholm
Christopherson
Comartin
Cotler
Cullen
Davies (Vancouver Kingsway)
Day
Dion
Donnelly
Dubé
Duncan (Etobicoke North)
Dusseault
Eyking
Freeman
Garrison
Genest-Jourdain
Godin
Gravelle
Harris (Scarborough Southwest)
Hsu
Hyer
Jones
Karygiannis
Lapointe
Latendresse
LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Leslie
MacAulay
Marston
Mathysen
McGuinty
Michaud
Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)

Adjournment Proceedings

Gosal	Gourde	Hughes	Hyer
Grewal	Harris (Cariboo—Prince George)	Jacob	Jones
Hawn	Hayes	Julian	Karygiannis
Hiebert	Hillyer	Lamoureux	Lapointe
Hoback	Holder	Larose	Latendresse
James	Kamp (Pitt Meadows—Maple Ridge—Mission)	Laverdière	LeBlanc (Beauséjour)
Keddy (South Shore—St. Margaret's)	Kenney (Calgary Southeast)	LeBlanc (LaSalle—Émard)	Leslie
Kent	Kerr	Liu	MacAulay
Komarnicki	Kramp (Prince Edward—Hastings)	Mai	Marston
Lake	Lauzon	Masse	Mathysen
Lebel	Leef	McCallum	McGuinty
Leitch	Lemieux	McKay (Scarborough—Guildwood)	Michaud
Leung	Lizon	Moore (Abitibi—Témiscamingue)	Morin (Chicoutimi—Le Fjord)
Lobb	Lukiwski	Morin (Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Lachine)	Morin (Laurentides—Labelle)
Lunney	MacKay (Central Nova)	Morin (Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot)	Mourani
MacKenzie	Maguire	Mulcair	Murray
Mayes	McColeman	Nantel	Nash
McLeod	Menegakis	Nicholls	Nunez-Melo
Merrifield	Miller	Pacetti	Papillon
Moore (Fundy Royal)	Norlock	Péclet	Perreault
O'Connor	Oliver	Plamondon	Quach
O'Neill Gordon	Opitz	Rafferty	Rankin
O'Toole	Paradis	Ravignat	Raynault
Payne	Poilievre	Regan	Rousseau
Preston	Rajotte	Saganash	Sandhu
Rathgeber	Reid	Scott	Sellah
Rempel	Richards	Sgro	Sims (Bonavista—Gander—Grand Falls—Wind- sor)
Rickford	Ritz	Sims (Newton—North Delta)	Sitsabaiesan
Saxton	Schellenberger	St-Denis	Stewart
Seeback	Shea	Stoffler	Sullivan
Shipley	Smith	Thibeault	Toone
Sopuck	Sorenson	Tremblay	Trudeau
Stanton	Storseth	Turmel	Valeriote— 130
Strahl	Sweet		
Tilson	Toet		
Trost	Trottier		
Truppe	Uppal		
Valcourt	Van Kesteren		
Van Loan	Vellacott		
Wallace	Warawa		
Warkentin	Watson		
Weston (West Vancouver—Sunshine Coast—Sea to Sky Country)	Williamson		
Weston (Saint John)	Woodworth		
Wilks	Young (Oakville)		
Wong	Zimmer— 150		
Yelich			
Young (Vancouver South)			

PAIRED

Nil

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.
(Bill read the third time and passed)

ADJOURNMENT PROCEEDINGS

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

● (1915)

[English]

THE ECONOMY

Mr. Bruce Hyer (Thunder Bay—Superior North, GP): Mr. Speaker, the Conservatives boast that they are the party of fiscal responsibility, but let us look at some facts. The facts show otherwise. The government gets a failing grade on practically every aspect of economic management, or should I say mismanagement, and the most recent budget does nothing to clean up the mess the Conservatives have made of our economy.

Unemployment has increased 9% under the government. The youth unemployment rate is double the national rate. Canadians are struggling to support themselves and their families. Canada is 20th in the OECD for job creation. Meanwhile, the government refuses to roll back its job-killing payroll tax hikes. The current freeze on EI premiums means little when the Conservatives have inflated the rates for so long. They are balancing the budget on the backs of hard-working Canadians and small businesses.

NAYS

Members

Allen (Welland)	Andrews
Angus	Ashton
Aubin	Ayala
Bélangier	Bennett
Benskin	Bevington
Blanchette	Blanchette-Lamothe
Boivin	Borg
Boulerice	Boutin-Sweet
Brahmi	Brisson
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 (Etobicoke North)
Duncan (Edmonton—Strathcona)	Dusseau
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Fortin	Freeman
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Budget 2014 did not just fall flat on job creation. It failed to invest in the services that are the most important to Canadians. With the aging population in Thunder Bay—Superior North and across Canada, our health care needs are increasing. Yet somehow we see no investment in health care in the budget.

The Thunder Bay Regional Health Science Centre recently broke the record for overcapacity and was in gridlock for five straight weeks. We are headed for a crisis as the Conservatives sit on their hands. They are burying their heads in the sand with their refusal to adequately fund health care, and it is compromising Canadians' right to universal health care.

It is not just health care that is in danger. The Conservatives have also neglected the retirement security of our seniors. They have balked at much-needed pension reform and even blocked consensus on the matter. We see no plan to protect Canada's seniors, who have worked hard for so many years only to be abandoned by their government in their old age. Why is the government leaving our retirees financially insecure?

In my riding, it seems that the Conservatives have made it an obsession to shut as many vital services as possible. They have slashed local Veterans Affairs, Citizenship and Immigration, Canada Revenue Agency, and Marine Communications and Traffic Services offices, and they have cut jobs across the board in Thunder Bay and all regions. Northwestern Ontarians pay taxes just like the rest of Canadians, but they are forced to bear a greater burden of taxes, as large multinationals pay less than half the U.S.A. rate.

Declining services are not the only problem. The Conservatives may go on and on about reducing the national debt, but they are the ones who have added \$123 billion to the debt since they took office. That is a 25% increase. Is this what debt reduction looks like? It is clear that the Conservative government is misrepresenting the facts.

What is even more important is the Conservatives' ignorance of the needs of ordinary Canadians, whose personal debt has gone up 26%. Canadians simply cannot afford it. The average cost of a house has risen 52%. It costs an average Canadian homeowner over \$400,000 to buy a small house. How are Canadians supposed to put roofs over their heads?

Canadians need more than empty promises from Conservatives. They need real fiscal responsibility that puts Canadians first. The Conservatives talk a lot about their so-called economic record, but all we can see are deep service cuts that hurt hard-working Canadians and increased debt.

● (1920)

Mr. Andrew Saxton (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Finance, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I do not know where my hon. colleague is getting his so-called facts from, but they certainly do not jibe with any numbers I have seen.

Let me reassure the hon. member that job creation remains a top priority for our government. Through Canada's economic action plan, we are taking real action to support investment, economic growth, and job creation, including initiatives that directly support the development of a skilled, mobile, and inclusive workforce within an efficient labour market.

Our efforts speak for themselves. First and foremost, we are well on our way to balancing the budget in 2015, and our economic action plan is strengthening the economy at the same time. Since July 2009, employment has increased by more than one million and is more than 600,000 jobs above its pre-recession peak, the strongest job growth in all G7 countries since the recovery.

Over 85% of all jobs created since July 2009 have been full-time positions, 80% are in the private sector, and over two-thirds are in high-wage industries. Real GDP is significantly above pre-recession levels, one of the best performances in the G7.

Both the independent International Monetary Fund and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development are projecting that Canada's growth will be among the strongest in the G7 in the years ahead.

Canada is also the only G7 country to have a rock solid AAA rating with a stable outlook from all major credit rating agencies: Moody's, Fitch, and Standard and Poor's. The list goes on. However, this is not to say that our work is done.

The Canadian Chamber of Commerce, for example, lists skills shortages as the number one barrier to Canada's competitiveness. In response, our government has quickly put in place a range of concrete measures to directly support the development of a skilled, mobile, and productive workforce. Economic action plan 2014 proposes further steps in this direction.

It confirms, for example, that the Canada job grant will be up and running in 2014, which could provide up to \$15,000 per person for eligible training costs, including up to \$10,000 in federal contributions. The Canada job grant will encourage greater employer participation in skills training decisions and ensure that training is better aligned with job opportunities, particularly in sectors facing skills mismatches and labour shortages.

While the grant will require matching from employers, small businesses will also benefit from greater flexibility in their cost matching arrangements, recognizing the particular challenges they face.

To further address skills shortages, economic action plan 2014 also proposes to create the Canada apprentice loan program by expanding the Canada student loans program to provide apprentices registered in Red Seal trades with access to over \$100 million in interest-free loans each year.

At the same time, it proposes to introduce the flexibility and innovation in apprenticeship technical training pilot project to expand the use of innovative approaches to delivering apprenticeship technical training.

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Our government believes these findings underscore the importance of transforming skills training in Canada to ensure that funding supports the needs of the labour market.

Subsequently, this has also driven the government's commitment to promote education in high-demand fields, and the measures we have taken to financially support apprentices and the employers that hire them, including the apprenticeship job creation tax credit and the apprenticeship completion grant.

Supporting job opportunities for all Canadians is a commitment in which we have made important investments and we will continue to act, unlike the opposition, which votes against every job creating measure we have introduced.

Mr. Bruce Hyer: Mr. Speaker, please, that is enough blarney from the Conservatives.

Canadians need action. We need services we can rely on and real job creation so we can be financially stable, individually and collectively.

In budget 2014, Thunder Bay—Superior North and I were looking for support for our seniors and pension reform, but nothing was offered. We were looking for a fee and dividend system that would put a price on carbon and put money back into the pockets of taxpayers, but the government did not even mention climate change in the budget. We sought incentives for small business owners, but instead the government got rid of the \$1,000 hiring tax credit and refuses to reduce the job-killing EI premiums and a huge EI fund surplus, which is really a tax.

The government's fiscal plan does not work for my constituents. The Conservatives claim to be putting the economy first, but all I can see is that they are putting Canadians last.

• (1925)

Mr. Andrew Saxton: Mr. Speaker, I know that the hon. member would like to introduce a \$20 billion job-killing carbon tax, like his former colleagues in the NDP, but over here we have a plan. We have Canada's economic action plan.

Through the economic action plan, we are creating jobs by reforming the on-reserve education system, in partnership with first nations, through the first nations control of first nations education act. We are investing \$14 million over two years and \$4.7 million per year ongoing toward the successful implementation of an expression of interest economic immigration system to support Canada's labour market needs. We are helping older workers get back to work by investing \$75 million in the targeted initiative for older workers program to support older workers who want to participate in the job market. We are reviewing the youth employment strategy to better align it with the evolving realities of the job market.

On this side of the House, we believe that Canada's long-term economic prosperity depends on our capacity as a country to realize the immense potential of our people. That is what we are doing.

[*Translation*]

VETERANS

Mr. Tarik Brahmi (Saint-Jean, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on February 28, 2014, I asked the Minister of Veterans Affairs a question about homeless veterans.

In Montreal alone, at least 50 homeless veterans have been identified. Given that many of them have never used the services of Veterans Affairs Canada, I asked what the government was doing to identify and help homeless veterans and what it would do to ensure that new veterans did not end up on the street.

The minister said two things in reply. First, he said:

...Canadian veterans are eligible for thousands of dollars worth of benefits and services that are not available to the general public.

Then, he said:

Identifying veterans among the homeless is a daunting task.

I think that the minister should be ashamed of giving such irresponsible and contemptuous answers. First of all, the least we can do for those who sacrificed themselves to protect us is provide these services. Second of all, just because a task is daunting does not mean that the government should not undertake it.

I would now like to give an example of the government's mismanagement, taken from the Veterans Affairs Canada response to the Veterans Ombudsman. It states that processing an application for the rehabilitation program can take up to 34 days and that there are often further delays. Why? Because information is often missing from the application. They acknowledge that:

For veterans in crisis, VAC can expedite the application process, both by helping veterans complete the application quickly...

For example, Saint-Jean has an integrated personnel support centre where military personnel who are transitioning to civilian life can meet with an official for a transition interview. This is not a luxury.

What is the Conservative government doing to improve local services? Is it improving front-line service? No—instead it is closing veterans' service centres. That is what I call incompetent management.

The situation in Montreal is particularly worrisome for my riding because many soldiers who served on the Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu base decided to settle in the area. When their housing situation is already precarious and they become homeless, it is more likely that they will go to Montreal because there are practically no services for the homeless in the suburbs and cities around Montreal.

Something else is troubling: 50 homeless veterans have been identified in Montreal, but this number is probably low because no systematic classification has been carried out. Even though we do not have a statistical study to that effect, it is reasonable to believe that the problems of homelessness are related to mental health problems. As we know, there is an epidemic of post-traumatic stress disorder in this country. Just last Wednesday, we learned of the suicide of another veteran at the Valcartier base.

In its October 16, 2013, throne speech the government declared: “We will reach out to homeless veterans and help give them the support they need”. This promise has not been kept and is not enough.

The NDP believes that the government must be proactive. Not only must it get our veterans off the streets, but it must also identify those living in precarious situations who run the risk of becoming homeless.

• (1930)

[*English*]

Mr. Parm Gill (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Veterans Affairs, CPC): Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the opportunity to demonstrate how the Government of Canada has made it a priority to identify homeless veterans and those at risk of becoming homeless.

To make sure that they get the help they need to leave the streets behind, as the Minister of Veterans Affairs said when a member opposite first asked a question some weeks ago, we already have a number of benefits and services in place for eligible veterans, including an emergency fund exclusively for veterans in crisis. The general public cannot access this support, so, as the minister said, it is not only sad and tragic that some veterans are homeless, it is entirely unnecessary.

Of course, one challenge is trying to identify veterans who are homeless or living on the margins of society. That is why we are taking strong action in a variety of ways.

We have ongoing outreach initiatives in many of our largest cities, such as Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, Calgary, Ottawa, and Halifax, to identify and assist veterans who are living on the streets or are bouncing from one friend's couch to another's.

We are forging new partnerships and testing new pilot projects at the grassroots level, whether it is with other government departments, other levels of government, or countless community organizations that have experience and expertise in working with homeless Canadians.

Employees at Veterans Affairs Canada area offices are connecting with organizations in their local communities to raise awareness about the services and benefits available from Veterans Affairs Canada to assist veterans and to ensure that Veterans Affairs Canada staff know about support in their communities.

We are doing all of these things as we continue to develop a comprehensive approach to helping veterans who are homeless or are at risk of becoming homeless.

We realize that homelessness is a serious issue for veterans and civilians alike. We understand that there can be a series of contributing factors at play, complex issues that can often begin with an addiction or a mental health condition.

We fully recognize that no one government department or agency can solve the problems of homelessness on its own. That is why the Minister of Veterans Affairs has appealed to Canadians who are aware of a homeless veteran or a veteran in need to please contact the department immediately. We have the programs, services, and benefits available that could make all the difference in a veteran's

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life. It is just a matter of ensuring that the help reaches where it is needed, and we can all make sure that this happens.

Mr. Tarik Brahmi: Mr. Speaker, it is not enough to try to help veterans once they are living on the street. These are men and women who were selected for their ability to keep on fighting in situations of physical pain without complaining. These are men and women who were trained to move forward and not give up when facing dangerous situations. Many of them may be too proud to ask for help. It is the government's responsibility to be proactive and to let them know that there is help available should they need it.

I ask the question again: What is the government going to do to identify veterans at risk to make sure that they do not end up on the street?

Mr. Parm Gill: Mr. Speaker, I want to repeat and reassure all members that our government is determined to do everything possible to identify veterans living on the street as well those who are at risk of becoming homeless.

We are also committed to making sure that these veterans get the help they need and that they have access to benefits and services that are exclusively for them when they are in such an unfortunate situation.

We continue to support and analyze research that looks at the most effective ways of identifying and helping homeless veterans, including the housing-first approach. We are always ready and willing to help veterans in any way we can.

• (1935)

CANADA POST

Mr. Mike Sullivan (York South—Weston, NDP): Mr. Speaker, on February 25 I asked the minister responsible for persons living with disabilities what the government would do to ensure that disabled Canadians are not adversely affected by the decision of Canada Post to end door-to-door mail delivery. The question was prompted, in part, by the passing of a resolution by the City of Toronto that rejected Canada Post's plan to convert from door-to-door delivery to community mailboxes. The city was particularly concerned by the effect this decision would have on seniors with mobility issues and on other persons with disabilities.

The minister responsible for persons with disabilities did not respond. Rather, the Minister of Transport responded that it was her understanding that Canada Post was working with national councils with respect to the disabled and disadvantaged to ensure that it can appropriately provide service.

I have been in contact with Canada Post on this issue, and its responses have been less than encouraging. Thus far, as far as I am aware, the only option ever presented to any disabled individual was to be given an extra key and be told to find a friend or relative to get the mail for them. In other words, Canada Post, which has been running community mailboxes for 30 years, still has not figured out how to deal with the very real problem of providing service to persons with disabilities.

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When I suggested that the boxes were not cleared of snow and were inaccessible, the answer was to tell Canada Post which one it was, and someone would be sent out. Canada Post's stated position is that persons with disabilities who face an "unacceptable hardship" will be dealt with somehow. Canada Post does not know how, and it refused to define what it means by "unacceptable hardship". Canada Post has failed to provide the service to persons with disabilities now, and to suggest that the horse will change its spots in the future is an extreme stretch of credibility.

Canada is signatory to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. One of the principal tenets of that convention is that we should never go backwards. Life should always be made better, not worse, for persons living with disabilities. It is the minister's responsibility to ensure that federal institutions and organizations, such as Canada Post, do not drift backwards, regardless of the need to save money or to cut corners. In other words, our international commitments signed by the government should prevent any worsening of the standards of living for persons with disabilities. That will certainly be the case if they are forced to find other mechanisms to get their mail or are unable to receive mail because of inaccessible boxes.

I have witnessed community boxes that were completely inaccessible to a person in a wheelchair. They are not routinely cleared of snow. They are on the opposite side of a street, which itself is not cleared by the municipality. They do not necessarily have a curb cut for a wheelchair.

After 30 years, one would think Canada Post would have managed this situation. My point is that left to its own devices, Canada Post has 30 years of history to prove to us how competent it has been at dealing with persons with disabilities. It is not competent.

However, persons with disabilities have been able to avoid that incompetence by living in the 70% of private homes in Canada that still have door-to-door delivery or in an apartment building that has delivery to the lobby.

Before another community mailbox is installed, the federal government should take stern action to ensure that Canada Post cleans up its act. That means taking seriously the problem soon to be faced by the residents of Kanata, Oakville, and so on, and demanding that Canada Post's conversion plans cease.

Mr. Jeff Watson (Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Transport, CPC): Mr. Speaker, as a crown corporation that operates at arm's length from the government, Canada Post is responsible for its own operations. Canada Post's mandate is spelled out in the Canada Post Corporation Act and includes the need to conduct its operations on a self-sustaining financial basis.

The reality is that Canada Post can no longer remain financially self-sustaining within its current business model. Canadians are no longer using the mail to the extent they once did. Increasingly, Canadians are choosing digital alternatives to the mail. In fact, most of the correspondence we now receive concerning Canada Post is sent via email.

One of the key initiatives of Canada Post's five-point action plan, which the corporation announced in December, is the five-year

transition to community mailboxes for the five million urban addresses that are still receiving door-to-door delivery. Since two-thirds of Canadians already receive their mail through venues other than door-to-door delivery, Canada Post believes that this initiative represents a sensible approach to saving costs. It mitigates the future massive losses that otherwise threaten the existence of postal service itself. The alternative is to ask Canadian taxpayers to subsidize those still receiving door-to-door delivery.

It should be noted that there will be no change for mail recipients living in apartment buildings, condominiums, and seniors residences, such as retirement homes, who will continue to receive their mail in the lobby of their buildings. Canadians receiving their mail through rural end-of-laneway mailboxes will also not be affected by the change.

In recent news releases, Canada Post has committed that no one will be left behind from accessing community mailboxes and that it intends to seek out the views of affected citizens directly, including through direct mail surveys and online feedback tools to ensure that solutions are available for people with significant mobility challenges who lack viable alternatives.

Given the importance of continued mail delivery over the long term, the government recognizes the importance of what Canada Post is working to achieve through the implementation of its five-point action plan. It should be noted that The Conference Board of Canada projected that Canada Post could lose roughly \$1 billion a year just six years from now. Furthermore, in 2012, Canada Post delivered one billion fewer letters than it did in 2006.

Our government believes that Canada Post must balance its finances without being a burden on Canadian taxpayers, and that is what we expect it to do.

• (1940)

Mr. Mike Sullivan: Mr. Speaker, if I had wanted the talking points that the Conservative Party has put together for the minister to talk about the need to change Canada Post, or the lack of funding that Canada Post is currently facing, I would have asked the Minister of Transport that question. However, I did not ask him that question. I asked it of the minister responsible for persons living with disabilities.

I did not get an answer to the question of what the government intends to do to force Canada Post to live up to our commitments to the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. We should not go backwards. We should not make life worse than it already is for persons living with disabilities.

Canada Post has had 30 years of experience with community mailboxes, and it has not managed to find an acceptable alternative mail delivery system for those persons living with disabilities. In fact, all it has done for persons living with disabilities is offer them a spare key. As far as I am aware, that is the only thing Canada Post has up its sleeve at the moment. Therefore, that is completely unacceptable to the government and it should be unacceptable to all Canadians.

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Mr. Jeff Watson: Mr. Speaker, I appreciate the member would love a national takeover of every arm's length agency under the sun. However, it is Canada Post that is an independent arm's length crown corporation. It is responsible on its own to not only operate on a financially self-sustaining basis but to take the operational decisions that are necessary within its business case.

I appreciate the member would like everyone to intervene in that regard. However, if he has issues, Canada Post, in its five-point plan and subsequent communications has been indicating how it intends

to attempt to address these issues for those with significant mobility issues.

I would direct the member, if he has any further suggestions for Canada Post, to direct them to Canada Post's CEO.

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

(The House adjourned at 7:44 p.m.)

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